

Winthorpe
EVANGELICAL
SERMONS.

BY

THOMAS ADAM,
RECTOR OF WINTRINGHAM,
IN LINCOLNSHIRE.

L O N D O N:

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TO THE READER.

THE following Discourses are offered to the Public as a tribute of good-will towards them in their best and most important interests.

They were composed by the Author many years ago, and delivered both to his own and other congregations with a kind acceptance, and, as he humbly hopes, not without some benefit.

Being now, through the increase of age and its attendant infirmities, rendered unable any longer to deliver the word from the Pulpit, he is desirous of contributing to the good of his fellow-creatures, by such means as an indulgent Providence still leaves in his power.

The experience of many years has afforded him an opportunity of trying the Doctrines contained in them; and he is happy in being able, after repeated trial, to send forth this testimony to their blessing and veracity. Every period, and circumstance in life, have convinced him, more and more, of the truth and importance of those Doctrines, which are peculiar to the Gos-

pel of CHRIST JESUS, and of their absolute necessity in order to the happiness, holiness, and salvation of mankind.

It has been his grief to see these so much neglected, and other foundation substituted, to the overthrowing of the Scriptures, the great dishonour of God, and of our Church, and the extreme injury of the souls of men.

As a friend therefore to society in general, and as one who has a sincere regard for the Established Church in particular, he sends forth these sheets for the perusal of the Public. The object of his heart's desire, is not to captivate admiration by any elegance of stile, or striking novelty of sentiment, but to do good to the heart. To be an instrument in the hands of God of convincing men of their wretchedness, and ruined state, without a saving interest in Jesus Christ; and of the emptiness and insufficiency of all Religion which has not HIM as it's All in All; and at the same time to discover to them the way by which the faith of Jesus Christ is effectually operative to every good work.

It lies near to his heart, to see so many well-meaning persons, who through want of instruc-

tion in these particulars, are mistaking the Form of Godliness for Religion, and the Works of the Law for the Gospel of Christ, and stumbling at the only way of life and salvation, to their own very great misfortune, and the exceeding injury of Christianity.

As one, therefore, that has nearly finished his course, to whom applause or censure are of little weight, but the salvation of souls most precious, he wishes to do all that yet remains in his power, to undeceive them in so important a matter; and if it shall please God, that he may but be so happy as to succeed in promoting this good effect, his whole desire is answered.

J. S.

3 NO 63

P R E F A C E.

MY design in the following discourses is to set before the reader the chief points of Christian doctrine, and bear my testimony to the free grace of God in the salvation of man, as the way of peace, comfort, and holiness; in opposition to any scheme, thought, or opinion of *self-justification*.

The guilt, and damnableness of sin—the acknowledgement of *our own sin*, and earnest contrition for it—faith in Christ for our acceptance to a state of forgiveness, and the reward of eternal life—fidelity, and grateful obedience to him from a sense of his benefits—renunciation of our own righteousness, as an absolutely insufficient ground of salvation, and deep humility in every stage of our progress—And a new birth from the Spirit, enabling us to lay hold on and improve the mercy offered us, to repent, believe, and love—These are the great, comprehensive truths of the gospel, and what evidently distinguish it from all other religions.

An opinion of the powers of nature, or a sufficiency in man for the great end of his creation, present and future happiness, is so riveted in the minds of all, that we find it very difficult to get rid of it. The eye of reason is not so dim but that it can discern between good and evil; approve the one, and dislike the other. And this discernment, though sadly defective in the execution, is taken for rectitude, or some kind of merit in us; and set up as an equitable claim upon divine goodness for remission and indulgence, if not favour and reward. Hence the rejection of all revelation in some; and in others a mistaken notion, or partial acknowledgement of the Christian scheme of redemption, as if it was only a better rule enforced by a perfect example in it's author, with a fuller discovery of future rewards and punishments.

I would therefore humbly propose a passage of St. Paul to consideration, as a compendious state of the whole nature and design of Christianity, and a clear exposition of it's end, means, and manner of operation; or how it is fitted to effect the great purpose of reformation in the deep ground of the heart, promote our return to God, kindle our love, and secure our obedience

dience to him, by faith in Christ as the Mediator between God and man, saving us from wrath by the sacrifice of himself, and communicating his merits to us for our final acceptance. The passage I mean is this, 1 Tim. i. 5. *Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. The end of the commandment—what God requires of us, and intends to bring us to by the Gospel—is charity—the love of God, and of our neighbour consequent upon it—out of a pure heart—a heart purged from idolatrous love of the creature, and purely devoted to him—of a good conscience—a conscience established in a sense of peace and reconciliation with God—of, and by, faith unfeigned.* So that according to this genealogy of charity, as Dr. Hammond calls it, (though he does not give each part of it its proper distinction) *faith* is the parent of a *good conscience*, or a conscience purged from the sense of guilt; as that is of a *pure heart*; and *love* springing from them all completes the character of the Christian, and gives us a full view of this master-piece of divine wisdom for the recovery of man to holiness. If we keep close to this method, we may be sure our endeavours

vours in religion will be crowned with success. And on the contrary, if we build upon any other foundation than faith in the pardoning love of God, we have no reason to hope that any thing we do will prosper in our hands. We shall consider him in the main as a hard task-master; and by neglecting the means of his appointing, fail of the great end he intends to bring us to; and in which the health and recovery of our natures, our fitness for present communion with him, and the everlasting enjoyment of him consist, viz. Freedom of spirit in his service, and willing obedience from love.

Let it be taken for granted as much as you please, though it is far from being true, that men generally propose this end to themselves; still the question recurs, *how*, and by what *means*, it is attainable? By repeated efforts? By reflections on the loveliness of God, his goodness in nature, and wisdom in the formation and support of the universe? Let them convince us of his Being and Providence, as they ought; let them be the subjects of our enquiry and admiration, as they deserve; let them be admitted as helps to build us up, when once we are upon a right foundation, and have gained a competent knowledge from Scripture

ture of the grounds and reasons of our vanity and misery. For it must be owned that the world is a mixed scene at the best. Our comforts are few and transitory; our disappointments great and lasting. Sin, like poison, working in our blood, must necessarily trouble our repose; and God, to shew his displeasure against us for it, ever and anon breaks in upon the order of his own establishing, in his severe judgments and calamities; and crosses, sickness, and death are the common lot of all. Now the contemplation of a Being who made us for happiness, and for the most part withholds it from us, cannot have the desired efficacy to fix us in a state of pure love, unmixed gratitude, and filial subjection to him. He does not expect it should. He has pointed out to us surer means, and furnished us with better helps for the attainment of our great end; I hope I have the Christian Reader's leave to say What—*HIS Love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost*. And if the manifestation of it, in the manner declared in Scripture, by sending his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; if his unspeakable grace and goodness to us in our fallen state of weakness, impurity, and alienation from him, does not draw from us suitable returns of

love, and unite us to him in a sacred bond of everlasting, unalterable gratitude, we may venture to say that nothing else will.

Here then is one insuperable difficulty in the way of the religion of nature. Suppose discernment, and choice of the end, yet the means of attainment are, if not wholly wanting, yet insufficient; though I believe we are chiefly beholden to revelation for our knowledge of both. I would not be understood as if I thought these, or any other means, would be effectual without the operation of a Divine Spirit; and I fear those who think so are not enough sensible of the depth of their corruption, the deadness of their wills, impotence to good, and natural inability to bring themselves up to their duty; or else they take a false measure of it, and too easily persuade themselves that what they can do in their own strength, is all they ought to do, and all that God expects from them. But then as God has made us rational intelligent creatures, and reason the governing faculty in us, so he acts with us suitably to our natures. He informs and enlightens the understanding, shews us the best end, stirs us up to the prosecution of it by the best motives, and works with us in the use of them; and though

though we *can* do nothing without *Him*, he *will* do nothing without *us*. Though he is beforehand with us in his instructions, offers, persuasions, and influences, yet without approbation, and compliance on our parts, and the due exercise of our intellectual powers, no effect will follow. Reason is first blind in the things of God; but, with the help that is offered us, capable of admitting the light when it is presented to it, as the bodily eye does that of the sun; and one has no more light of it's own to see by than the other. But when it is restored to itself, so as to acknowledge it's incapacity, and depend upon God for direction and assistance, it will be the instrument in his hands of conducting us to happiness. We may now appeal to it for decision in those capital points of revelation, necessarily previous to a new state of faith and love—the dreadful malignity of sin, the necessity of repentance, and the unavailableness of it without the great atonement. For admitting the truth of that assertion, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*, supposing the guilt and damnableness of sin, what can man do for the removal of it from his conscience? Can we, under a forfeiture by our manifold transgressions

transgressions of the divine law, and sure to repeat them, presume upon the favour of the lawgiver? Will you venture all your hopes upon the delusive imagination that sin has no guilt, or if it has, no ill consequences? Or must God, instead of condemning sin, condemn himself, and give up the purity and holiness of his nature, by leaving it unpunished? Let the disputer of this world consult his reason in the case, and try the strength of it where it may be of use to him. He has no objection to the love of God; though perhaps he would never have thought of it, if the Gospel had not told him that it is the first and great commandment. But then what must he think of a Being, who in his own opinion is regardless of truth and justice; or how can he make such a supposition the ground of his love of him? And on the other hand, how can he love God under a sense of guilt unremoved, and just apprehension of his displeasure? So far reason accompanies us; but then here it leaves us all at once, terribly embarrassed, and incapable of giving ease to our own minds by any certain, or probable conclusion concerning the hopefulness of our state. One ray of light from above in this perplexity is worth a world.

Tell

Tell me how sin can be pardoned in such a way as to augment, instead of diminishing, our dread and hatred of it; tell me how guilt can be cancelled without defrauding infinite justice of it's rights, or how the sinner can be restored to the friendship of God without injury to any of his perfections, and hope will spring up in the soul; reason may be satisfied with a method of reconciliation which it could not contrive; and in proportion as it is understood and believed, Religion will have it's end, and God be restored to the possession of our hearts.

It is no small advantage in favour of Christianity, that, all things considered, the nature of God, the demerit of sin, and the necessity of a pardon, we cannot help wishing it to be true. It must be owned that a divine assurance in the case, to encourage our hope, promote our amendment, and be the ground of our love, is far better than weak surmises of a will in God to receive all to mercy, without regard to justice, or the extirpation of sin; a supposition which is attended with infinite difficulties, and must for ever leave us in a state of uncertainty, in a matter of the greatest moment to our peace. And though the greatness of
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the person, the God-man, by whom our relief is conveyed, and reconciliation effected, is magnified by some into a formidable objection against the truth of the Gospel; we presume to say it is the beauty and glory of it, and grand support of the whole; the clearest demonstration of the infinite evil of sin; of God's hatred of it, and will to punish it; the most awakening call to mankind to forsake it, the strongest proof of his love, and the surest foundation of trust in him. If a sacrifice of atonement was wanted, where could we have found one in all nature of sufficient value to purge our sins, satisfy the divine justice, bear the whole weight of our guilt, and pay the full price of our redemption, but that of God's appointing? What other would not have been liable to more objections, and less capable of quieting all our fears? And if it should be said, that *his appointment* would have made *any* of sufficient value, this is more than we know, and need not be afraid to deny. What we suppose God has done, is the best proof of what ought to be done. But if we should allow it not to be absolutely necessary, still it must be granted that nothing could have afforded us so strong a conviction of the misery of our condition in sin,

sin, and the glory of divine mercy; or have been so powerful a means of promoting our conversion to God in love, the essence of holiness, as the great dignity of the Mediator, and the stupendous method of our deliverance.

But what I would chiefly observe, is the precise nature of that *Faith* which has such effects ascribed to it in the aforementioned text; which denominates the conscience good, or clean in the sight of God, and at ease in itself, purifies the heart, and brings on a gracious habit of love. It is not only assent to the Bible, as a divine revelation; it is not, principally, the belief of a future state, as therein brought to light, and inculcated, with a prevailing regard to things invisible. The first of these is necessary in order to faith; the latter is the consequence of it, an excellent part of it, or faith in exercise; but neither one, nor both of them together, will bring out St. Paul's conclusion, or be the ground of that love which is the end of the commandment. *I believe the Gospel Revelation: I believe a future state, and that I must be a new man to attain to the happiness of it: therefore I love God and man:*—this is not the argument; the premises do not necessarily, or but remotely, lead to the
b conclusion.

conclusion. No; but *God has made all his goodness pass before me, in the forgiveness of my sins, and receiving me to a covenant of life; Christ loved me, and gave himself for me; therefore I can, and do love: this is sense, this is nature; here is a powerful call to the soul; in this way of reasoning all is clear, and one thing follows, and supports another. And therefore the precious faith of the Gospel, it's peculiarity, and great distinction, as an efficacious principle of holiness in love, as far as human agency can be concerned, is, and must be, what our Church defines it—a lively sense of God's mercies in Christ; (Church Catechism) a sure trust and confidence in God's merciful promises, to be saved from everlasting damnation by Christ; whereof doth follow a loving heart to obey his commandments. (Homilies, 3d part of the sermon of salvation.)*

It is also worthy of observation, that as this golden chain of divine truth, wherein one link depends upon another, is necessary for all, so it is alike suited to the understandings and capacities of all. As it is alike wanted by all, so it speaks with equal force and conviction to all, by speaking to the heart. It requires no depth of learning, or extraordinary subtlety, to comprehend it; but is a plain appeal to the common

state of man, and what one may be as sensible of as another. The remission of sins by *Faith*, and from thence *peace in the conscience*, sweetly engaging to *inward purity*, and disposing for obedience in *Love*—This is such a method of relief, as every man may know and experience within himself to be suitable to his case; the cure of a wound which he feels; and which all, having the same nature, must feel alike, and be led by this feeling, as they are in other cases, to seek a remedy. Propose any other method of cure, go to the schools of the learned, explain their systems, employ all their eloquence, use all their authority, and what have you done for the bulk of mankind? But let a few illiterate persons, by divine commission, carry this Gospel into all lands—*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them*—and the heart of man, whether rich or poor, simple or learned, will echo to the sound, and every string of it be touched with the offer of such love. In the name of the God of love, and in pity to mankind, let it be fully declared to all! Let us rise up as one man against all sacrilegious attempts, whether of Mystic or Socinian, to vacate the doctrine of *atonement*. Which is no other

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than tearing out the heart of the Bible, depriving Faith of it's ground and the Gospel of it's comfort, and thereby of it's efficacy to convert and purify the heart. Let us not pretend to be wise above what is written, by laying any other foundation of acceptance, and newness of life, than faith in the Son of God; not only as living in us, but dying for us; to deliver us from wrath by the very blood he shed upon the cross, take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, make faith, in the chief Scripture notion of it, possible, and an effectual principle, in the Spirit's hands, of holy love, joy in God, and delight in his commandments.

But still it is alledged, 1. That insisting so much on the doctrine of Salvation by Faith, faith alone, or present forgiveness, and eternal justification, by the grace of God to every man, is useless, if not hurtful; that it is establishing a fanatical, enthusiastic notion of faith, which in the main has no other tendency than to lead men into a state of dangerous presumption, and false security, and to make them less careful of their obedience; and that therefore it is better in a general way to ply them with exhortations to holiness, supposing that they are competently instructed in the grounds of
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Christian knowledge, and want chiefly to be stirred up to the practice of what they believe. For which, 2dly, The example of Christ himself is urged. It is said, we hear little or nothing from Him of Faith, thus understood, in his discourses to the people.

I. The first objection consists of several parts. But St. Paul, we presume, has struck at the whole in this admirable description of Christian Theology here produced. It is plain he knew of no other way of securing obedience, directing us to the most perfect kind of holiness, and animating us to the attainment of it, than Gospel comfort, or peace with God from a root of faith. The difficulty was often thrown in the way of his preaching—*let us sin that grace may abound*. But what then? Did he flinch from it, or alter his method? No; he rejects the imputation with scorn and abhorrence, and cries out, “God forbid! Impossible! How can this be! Death with Christ to the condemnation of sin, is death to the power of it; and if we truly believe that we died with him in one respect, in him paying the debt of sin, we shall make it our business, chief aim, and great hope, to die with him in all others.” He was a stranger to that distinction, which has since

been invented, between works of the ceremonial and moral law; as if the former only were excluded from the office of justifying. Neither would the Jews of his day have had any dispute with him upon the question so stated. It does not appear that they put any such confidence in the ceremonial law, as to suppose that the most punctual observation of it would entitle them to the favour of God. And if it can be doubted what the law was which St. Paul chiefly meant, what law it was which tormented his conscience, set death before his face, and made him fly to the faith of Christ for relief in the distress of his soul, he himself will tell us plainly, and thereby open a way to every man for the discovery of his own sin; it was that sting in the law of the ten commandments, *thou shalt not covet*. This darted into him the light of heaven; he found he was guilty of evil lusting in the depth of his heart, and stood chargeable with the sin of an apostate, opposing will. And when he saw the truth, he suffered it to come home to him. He knew there was no trifling with a divine command; especially one so like the first, the breach of which brought death into the world; that it would be to little purpose to plead nature,

ture, or strength of temptation, or trust to an unknown mercy in God against his own express declaration, as men generally do, to the exclusion of repentance, and rejection of faith, through ignorance of it's necessity; and this conviction fastened upon him with all it's force, that a will and desire in the heart of man opposite to the will of God must necessarily bring condemnation along with it, and that the law would infallibly do it's whole office upon him, in commanding first, and then judging. Behold him a new man in a new world, cheered with a sense of remission, with his eyes opened to see more fully the danger he had escaped, the mercy of his deliverance, the blood of God shed to procure it, faith his title to it, the blessed Spirit clearing it up to him, and working at the bottom of all his convictions, and what would he do? Sin against all this astonishing grace, make it a handle for careless presumption, rebel against the authority, and grieve the heart of his Redeemer? Or be all on fire to testify his gratitude, by doing what was required of him, and say triumphantly, *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost?* Upon this view of the matter, I think we may venture to dismiss the objection for

ever ; and challenge all the world to shew a scheme of religion so well adapted to the state of sinful man, to bring him out of his fall, and put all the powers of his soul in motion towards God, by this glorious display of his goodness. And why then should it not be largely insisted on among Christians, proved, explained, gloried in ? As it is not only our necessary relief from the guilt and condemnation of sin, but the purpose and contrivance of infinite wisdom to establish the law, make obedience pleasant to our souls, and acceptable to God, by laying the foundation of it in love, and carry us on with a swift progress towards that perfection of good works, for which so much concern is avowed. Ah ! this is nothing but Satan transforming himself into an angel of light, and putting us off with a form instead of the power of godliness ; which can have no being but in a heart warmed with a sense of redeeming mercy. And if some should make it an argument for sloth, or take occasion from it to harden themselves in impenitence, this it must be confessed is a most wretched abuse of it, but no reason for giving it up, or speaking but coldly of it ; since it is the great expedient in the compass of divine knowledge
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for bringing *any* to the truth of holiness, by the renewal of their minds in love, which is God's image in man, and must fit us for glory. Happy, thrice happy is that age and country where the knowledge of Christ, and faith in him as our life, is so general as to make it the less necessary to dwell upon these topics. But if there be any such, I fear it is not ours. And besides, how should this faith and knowledge ever be general any where, but by having been some time or other carefully and frequently inculcated? How should they long be preserved any where, if the method by which they were first established is discontinued? And how should they be otherwise revived, where they are too generally disregarded, than by being again fully opened and explained?

2. But Christ himself, it is said, did not so; he was a preacher of moral righteousness, and laid the greatest stress upon that; and where can we have a better model, or equal authority? Now the ground of this objection is partly true, and partly false, and the whole of it capable of a satisfactory answer.

It was a matter of the utmost consequence that Christ should establish a pure and perfect

fect morality, as the mark his followers were to aim at, and to prevent the cavils of his adversaries, who he knew were ready to take exceptions at his person and preaching; and that because at some times, and upon some occasions, he actually furnished them with a handle for it, by declaring that way of salvation which was to be fully opened after his death, and could not before. To have been altogether silent upon it, would have given too much countenance to the foregoing objection; and to have made salvation by faith in him, as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world, the constant subject of his discourses, would have been in some measure authorising his death, and acquitting his murderers. Neither could the point, however great and interesting, be insisted on, nor spoken of but in a covert way, nor so much as understood before the event. The full declaration of it as a fact, it is evident could not be made before it became such, but must of necessity be reserved for his Apostles; on whose testimony it stands, and who were appointed by him, with his own full authority, and power from the Holy Ghost, to do what he could not, that is, to open the doctrine of his kingdom, to explain

plain the nature, and proclaim the benefits of his death. He was therefore in very delicate circumstances. The sacrifice of his death was to be the ground of his religion, and faith in it the means of our acceptance with God, and renovation to holiness. The last of these he might speak of without reserve; and it was expedient that he should, to clear himself from all imputation of diminishing one jot from the sacredness of the law. He therefore explains, and proposes it in it's utmost purity; both to enforce it as a rule, and prepare mankind for a new œconomy, by awakening the conscience to a sense of guilt in coming short of it. The two former he could not speak much of for the reasons before-mentioned; and yet he has said enough to destroy the force of the objection, of which we have undoubted proof from many passages of St. John's Gospel, particularly the third chapter. And it may also fairly be collected from other instances, that he did not conceal the great peculiarity of his religion, viz. *salvation by grace, through faith*. *Think not*, says he, *that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets*. Now what ground could there be for such a suspicion, if he did not really destroy the law, the ceremonial-law wholly, and the moral

moral in one sense, viz. by speaking of it as insufficient for justification, and sometimes in the course of his conversation and preaching declaring what was sufficient? Or if the words were designed to obviate a calumny, which he knew would be taken up against the doctrine of faith when it should afterwards be more fully preached, either way they will turn out to our purpose; if he did not openly avow and inculcate the doctrine himself, it is plain he intended that others should.

Again, when the scribes and pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery, to know his sentiments of the crime, and what punishment was due to it, it is expressly said that they did it with a view to find matter of accusation against him. And to prevent all evasion, or possibility of escape from the snare they had laid for him, they put him in mind of what Moses had already determined in the case. What? could it be supposed that he who had declared for such a degree of purity in the matter, as to pronounce the looking upon a woman to lust after her to be adultery, would deny the guilt, or lessen the punishment of the outward act? No; but they knew he had a way of his own of clearing

both from guilt and punishment; that when he said, *repent, and believe the Gospel*, he meant something more by the last word than some do now; and concluded that he must either deny what he asserted upon other occasions, or stand convicted as an abettor of loose morals, and a subverter of the law. The sequel is known. With admirable address he extricated himself from the difficulty, to the confusion of his adversaries, without betraying either law or Gospel. He would neither retract what it may fairly be supposed from this instance he used to say of the one, nor destroy the obligation of the other; he established both by pardoning the sinner, and condemning the sin.

But whether Christ spoke but little, or not at all of the doctrine of faith, and whether the reasons assigned for his not insisting more upon it himself are sufficient, or not, still the conclusion fails; it cannot be inferred from his example that he did not intend the greatest stress should be laid upon it in the future preaching of his ministers. And I think he himself hath set us right in the point. For how runs the commission to his Apostles, when he had laid the foundation of faith in his death by dying,

dying, and could no longer be under any reserve in the matter, but must be supposed to give them the clearest instructions in the nature of their office, and point out precisely the message they had to deliver? *Go ye, says he, into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* What Gospel? He adds by way of explanation, *he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 15, 16. How remarkable is this! I mean, the *shortness* of the commission. Surely for this very reason it demands our utmost attention, and is ample conviction to us what account is to be made of faith; since Christ summed up the whole Gospel in it, and gave it in charge to his Disciples to lay this foundation, and propose salvation to all by *believing*. This, I say, is placing the article in a very strong light. But still it is too generally evaded, either by substituting different notions of faith in the room of what is here alledged as the true, or by a loose supposition that as *faith* is in order to *holiness*, so it is the business of the preachers of the Gospel at all times to lay themselves out chiefly in securing the latter. Let no endeavours be wanting to secure it. We hope we have our eye steadily
fixed

fixed upon it, and upon the commission as more largely expressed; Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. but then let God teach us the way of doing it. Let it be considered again, and always well remembered, that mercy, or a lively sense of the love of God in our discharge from condemnation, is the best, if not the sole *means* of attaining it, and that going to work without them, or keeping them for the most part out of sight, is taking men upon the foot of nature, appealing to an ability which they have not, and leading them into a dangerous mistake concerning their whole state and condition in the sight of God. That it is a state of sin and condemnation, the Bible was written to inform us; and that we can only be brought into a new condition of friendship with God, lively hope, and faithful working, by a sure trust and confidence in his mercy, discharging us from guilt, and accepting our persons in Christ. There is no trifling with this one, sacred method of recovery to the love of God, and the desire of holiness, by a sense of his goodness, as manifested in the work of our redemption. The stronger the faith, the greater our love and fidelity; and we desire once more to be informed what other root they can spring from,

from, or how they can be built on any other foundation. If this notion is branded as enthusiastic, we conceive the Apostles of our Lord lead us into it; and to them we appeal as infallible expositors of his meaning in the instructions he gave them. For it may here be remarked upon the whole, that the chief design of Christ's ministry was not to bear witness of himself, or deliver an entire plan of his religion; but to furnish his Apostles with the proofs of his being the Christ, when the time came for it's being published to the world. It is therefore a mistake of some consequence in those who set up the authority of Christ against that of his Apostles, and terminate their religion, as it were, in the history of his life recorded by the four Evangelists; which is only preparatory to the full manifestation of his Gospel, in it's grace, peace, and happy effects, by those whom he commissioned for that purpose; and whose authority in the case, as being that of the Holy Ghost, and in no respect inferior to his own, is final. *To them was committed the ministry of reconciliation*; and as they had the mind, so they had the command and power of Christ to open the grand design of his coming. What that is, St.

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St. Peter will tell us, Acts x. 43. *To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins*; remission of sins in our best as well as worst estate. Let this be acknowledged, and that in our highest attainments we must be undone without mercy from the Lord, and it will be evident at once what faith is, and what kind of it must be always in exercise. Salvation by a free gift to all who receive it in a deep sense of their unworthiness, will then appear in it's full lustre, as the pure Gospel, and the necessary relief of sinful man.

I now presume to address myself to my Reverend Brethren, with respect, and beseech them to consider, what kind of preaching is most likely to revive the decayed spirit of religion among us, and make our Jerusalem again a praise in the earth.

We are, under Christ, the depositaries of that grace of God which bringeth salvation, and, if we know our office, ordained to dispense it in all it's freedom and fullness. That grace, which can only be effectual to it's end, by being received as such:—that grace, which makes the Gospel glad tidings by placing man out of the reach of condemnation, notwithstanding the power
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and malignity of his corruption, and the holiness and purity of God: that mystery of godliness, which destroys sin by pardoning it, and lays us in the dust to raise us as high as heaven: that glorious, comfortable manifestation of God, which reconciles all his attributes, and makes the offer of mercy and peace to a lost world, an act of his justice: that grace, which in the inward spiritual experience of it, is the life of a sinner, turns his eyes, heart, and whole soul to God, kindles his hope, and invigorates his obedience: that grace, which was the basis of the Reformation, in opposition to an inveterate prevailing opinion of self-righteousness, as a claim for heaven; the awakening of the nations to an evangelical taste and sense of the love of God in Christ, gladly embraced, gloried in, and suffered for; and which, I doubt not, will precede every other reformation of the church, and be the beauty of it in it's highest state of perfection upon earth, as it is the triumphant song of the saints in heaven; Rev. v. 9. though now so hardly admitted, so much diminished, so rarely or so cautiously spoken of. Alas! we live upon the stock of our forefathers, and guide ourselves in the apostolical purity of the church we belong

to, (and apostolical it is, if it's liturgy, articles, and homilies, may be allowed to speak for it) and at the same time too generally conceal, or discountenance those very doctrines on which it is founded, and by which it is distinguished as a separation from some of the grossest errors of Popery. A multitude of great and respectable names, even at some considerable distance from the æra of the Reformation, shall give in a full testimony to the doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith in the merits and imputed righteousness of a Redeemer, and still be held in great veneration by us; and yet those who now stand out as witnesses of it, and pave the way to it by laying open the deep apostacy of man, bringing a charge of sin against all flesh, and proclaiming aloud the utter insufficiency of all works and services to atone for transgression, to reinstate us in the favour of God, to heal and comfort the contrite heart, are vilified and run down as enthusiasts; and their self-denying pains in vindicating and illustrating the most essential precious truths of the Gospel are branded under the name of the *new preaching*. The charge of novelty may well be denied; and it is a little surprising from those who have the Bible in their hands, and the

Articles of the Church of England formed upon it. But I fear there is no great mistake as to the matter of fact. It must be owned that salvation by faith alone, and a previous sense of the curse of sin, to make deliverance welcome and faith possible, has not of late entered much into our idea of preaching; and all attempts to revive it are almost as much wondered at, as the blessed Paul was, when he constantly affirmed, that *being justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord*. But surely it is matter of consideration whether this truth must still continue in force among us, and be made the ground of our preaching as the sole relief of conscience labouring under a sense of guilt, and the means of our establishment in holiness; or give way to popular essays on the reasonableness of virtue, or any display of the excellence of Christian morality, and the warmest exhortations to the practice of it, when the right foundation is not laid. It would be cruel mockery of one perishing with hunger to speak to him of the nature of food, and the suitableness of it to his case, without putting it into his mouth. It is not less so, but much greater cruelty to amuse our hearers with discourses on the beauty and necessity

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cessity of holiness, and urge them earnestly to reformation, and at the same time withhold that truth from them, which is appointed of God, and revealed by him in great mercy for the life of their souls. As I said before, it is appealing to an ability which they have not; and what is still worse, confirming them in an opinion of it, and can have no other tendency but to keep them from Christ. For every man would be self-saved if he could; and is easily encouraged to substitute the decency of an outward character, profession of religion, humanity, and acts of beneficence in the room of that profound knowledge of sin, which brings us to God in penitence and self-abasement; and casts the soul, helpless and undone in itself, upon the Lord Jesus Christ for his righteousness and salvation. Which, as it is something without us, and wholly undeserved, it is evident can only come to us in a way of believing; that is, in the sense of our absolute want of it, and the unfeigned joyful submission of our hearts and wills to it. And if this is properly Gospel mercy, what God offers to man for his unspeakable benefit, what Christ came to assure and derive to us, and the Spirit enables us to receive; if it is the alone efficacious

efficacious call of God to the soul in it's dead state, and the beginning and power of a new life of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: if by it we are renewed to the divine image and to the desire of holiness in the inner man; and can only be formalists, hypocrites, or self-deceivers without it: if we have no ground of hope, not one glimpse of comfort, no relief from sin, supposing the guilt of it, and the truth of Scripture, but by laying hold on the promises of God: if faith saves us, in every respect, *from* condemnation, *to* a lively obedience, and nothing else can—how great must be our guilt in not fully publishing and declaring that message of peace and good-will to men, which the angels came from heaven, with so much joy to proclaim? How can we bear, how shall we answer the imputation of such unfaithfulness to Christ and his truth, and to the souls committed to our care? And why is not that charge continually sounding in our ears, and deeply imprinted in our hearts—*Go and speak to the people all the words of this life?* Oh! let us try, in dependance on the all-powerful Spirit, what can be done for our sinful country, in this despised way of the *new preaching*; and unite to rescue it

it from contempt, lest the nation perish through unbelief. We have great cause to reflect deeply on the abounding of wickedness among us under the *old*, and I wish we had no reason for trying some other method.

I shall be excused for stopping here; and beseech you to bear with me thus far, as I am not conscious to myself of having uttered a word in the spirit of contention; or with any other design than to recommend an attention to those articles of our Church, which were once thought to be of the greatest importance. And supposing they are not intended only to be hung up as rusty armour, but of perpetual necessary use for the maintenance and establishment of Christian truth, to them I appeal against any censure which may be passed upon me.

Perhaps the sameness of thought which runs through the following discourses, and insisting on two or three points, may need some apology. If this is a real objection, I confess I know not how to answer it. They are published at the request, and in submission to the judgement of partial friends, who interest themselves in the doctrines recommended, and so often repeated in them; and thought they might be of use,

use, at least to the few already prepossessed in favour of the author. Every one has his small circle of well-wishers, who are more disposed to receive impressions from him on the score of acquaintance; and to them, with desire to serve them in their best interest, they are addressed; though it would be a criminal insensibility in me, not to wish that others also might reap some benefit from them.

They are accompanied with my prayers for a blessing: and I shall have cause to rejoice if they may contribute in any measure to the conviction of the unbelieving, the instruction of the ignorant, or the edification and support of those, who are seeking rest for their souls in Christ, and want to have their hearts purified by faith, that they may serve him in love, be partakers of his holiness, and received into his glory.

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S E R M O N I.

G E N. VI. 6.

*And it repented the Lord that he made man
on the Earth, and it grieved him at his
heart.*

UPON hearing these words, you will be ready to ask, how can it be said that God, who is unchangeably blessed and happy in himself, can repent and be grieved, and so grieved as to be cut, as it were, to the heart? The answer to which is, that he is here represented as speaking after the manner of men, who know very well what it is to repent when they have brought ruin upon themselves, and to be grieved for the loss of what is most dear to them. And the expressions are used to convey to us a lively notion of the miserable condition into which mankind was fallen, and to make a strong impression of it upon our minds. You should therefore

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upon hearing the words be ready to ask yourselves another question, what that condition was? And when you know it, to proceed still farther, and enquire, whether it is the condition of mankind now, how we came into it, and whether there are any means of deliverance from it? To assist you in these enquiries according to the light of scripture, will be the business of this discourse. The Lord help me in it; and as they are of the greatest importance to your repentance and conversion, present comfort and everlasting salvation, I beseech you attend carefully, and while I am speaking lift up your hearts to God in prayer, to enlighten your understandings, and incline you to receive, and apply what is said to the state of your souls.

I. I am to consider what the condition of mankind was, at the time here spoken of.

II. Whether mankind are in it now.

III. How we came into it.

IV. The way and means of deliverance from it.

I. What was the state of mankind here spoken of, on account of which it is said, *it repented*

repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart? It was the condition of mankind in sin. Sin that enemy to God and man had taken possession of them, and so thoroughly infected their natures, that according to the foregoing verse, *God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* What crimes they were guilty of, or what *particular* sins they were, if any, which drew this severe censure of them from the mouth of God, we are not told; only it is said in general, that *the earth was filled with violence.* From whence we may conclude, that God was forgotten and neglected by them, and the fear of him banished from their hearts. They did what they listed, and lived only to gratify their natural and sensual appetites, without restraint from his commands, or regard to his authority, or sense of what they were made and sent into the world for; which was to walk with him, as Enoch and Noah did, in the fulness of a free obedience, or as one friend does with another, delighting and delighted; to make him the great object of their faith, hope, love, and rejoicing, and to qualify them-

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selves

selves for the eternal enjoyment of him by a life of godliness, brotherly kindness, temperance, justice, and holy fear. But instead of this, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*, ruled and employed all their thoughts, were the end they lived for, and the only laws by which they would be governed; as we may learn from the character which our Saviour gives of them, *they did eat, they drank, they married wives, and were given in marriage*. Why, you will say, are not these things lawful and innocent, and necessary? How can the business of the world be carried on, or the world continue without them, or without *buying and selling, planting and building*, as they did in the days of Lot? All this is acknowledged; and yet here is weighty instruction for you, respecting man's duty and great business in the world, if you will receive it on the authority of scripture; whose excellence it is to rectify our mistakes, to enlighten our dark minds with the wisdom which cometh from above, and guide us into the way of truth and happiness. For these are the men of whom it is said in the same place, Luke xvii. *the flood came, and it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all*. Not for eating

eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, buying and selling, building and planting; no, but (mark it well) for neglecting their souls, living altogether to this world, and despising the offer of a better. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, or put themselves in the way to a happiness of his chusing for them, by living in subjection to his will, and recovering themselves out of that state of darkness, disorder, and corruption into which they were fallen; but were bent upon pleasing themselves in opposition to him, and if they could not find their heaven in the enjoyments and pleasures of this life, would not be persuaded to look for it any where else. And the consequence was such as might be expected, *the earth was filled with violence, and the wickedness of man in it was great*; as it always will be where men do not make the fear and love of God, faith in his promises, regard to his favour, and choice of him for their portion, the ruling principles of their lives. They are then prepared for the worst of crimes, and will be carried headlong into all manner of injustice, violence, and wickedness, at the will of their lusts. It is not to be supposed that all the men of that generation were equally

licentious, and all run into the same excess of riot. Doubtless there was a difference then, as there is at all times, in the behaviour and characters of men; some better and some worse, some from natural prudence and goodness of temper more civil, peaceable, and orderly than others. But nevertheless it is said of them all without distinction, *it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart, and the flood came and took them all away.* Whereas if God had known that any of them were worthy to escape the general destruction, we may presume he would have provided room for them in the ark, as he did for Noah and his family. What is it then that Christ affirms of them, as the reason why they were left to perish? It is, that *they did eat and drink, married and were given in marriage;* hereby giving us to understand that their hearts were wholly set upon the world, some in a more gross way of open violence, and shameless riot, but all forgetful of God, negligent and faithless concerning a life to come. And here is the instruction I told you of. Our great business in the world is with God; to look up to him in all we do, to receive him into our hearts, to adore and love him,

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to depend upon him for the blessings of time and eternity, to make him our hope and our portion, to seek after him as our treasure, to live with him and to him here, and to qualify ourselves for the completion of all his promises, in the everlasting enjoyment of him. But if we do not make this the great end and aim of our lives, keeping our thoughts intent upon it, and our hearts close to it, as the one thing needful, we are not the creatures he designed us to be, we do not answer the end he made us for, we are not capable of the happiness he intends for us, and can only bring us to in the way of our own desires and affections. If God is not our choice, and the supreme delight of our souls, whatever else we do we live only to displease him, whatever else we are in pursuit of will end in disappointment and misery, whatever else we get we lose all. It matters not as to our final, eternal interest, how prudent we are for this world, or how decently and regularly we enjoy it, if we do nothing else, and say with the fool in the Gospel, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry,* and look no farther. According to the wisdom of the world this man was no fool;

he knew when he had enough, and resolved to sit down contented, and make the best of what he had gotten; but he had other work upon his hands which he never thought of, and God knew what to call him. For *so*, says our Lord, *is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*, Luke xii. 21. If we have God for our treasure, we are rich indeed; if any thing, or every thing else, we are poor beyond expression. We may pass through the world with more ease and satisfaction to ourselves in a course of diligence, sobriety, and quiet behaviour, than the contrary, and he is a fool indeed who destroys his health by intemperance, or wastes his substance by idleness and extravagance, or provokes the ill-will of his neighbours by churlishness, or malice; but if we are only carrying on a design for this world, though it be with never so fair a reputation, we are no better than others in point of acceptance with God. He says, *seek ye after God, and your soul shall live*; and he cannot be mistaken in what he advises and directs us to as the way of life. What then can be the meaning of this, but that if we are turned from him, if we do not seek after him, esteem and chuse him as our portion
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and the dearest treasure of our hearts, as our God to help, rule, and bless us, and take us to himself when we die, our souls do not, cannot live, we are in the way of eternal death. He *will not*, according to his promise, *any more cut off all flesh with the waters of a flood*; but if he sees the same men and the same hearts upon the earth as he did then, he is still the same God, and the words of the text are alike spoken of all such, *it repenteth the Lord that he made them, and it grieveth him at his heart.*

II. The next thing we are to consider, is, whether this is now the condition of mankind.

And my design under this head is to observe to you that naturally it is. The scripture tells us of it, and the history of the world in all ages confirms it. We cannot think of any time when it was, we cannot say it is now, the natural disposition of men to honour and fear God, to make it their chief study to please him, and prefer his favour to all earthly possessions and enjoyments. We cannot say, with regard to men, that we act invariably by the sacred rules of justice and charity, giving to all their dues, loving their persons, supplying their
wants,

wants, studying the general peace, never doing to others what we should think hard and unreasonable in our own case, and so inclined to good as always to give it the preference to what we know to be evil. Who that sees what strange perverseness, what a stubborn spirit of disobedience and opposition to the will of God rules in mankind, would think we had such a book as the Bible among us, or the law of the ten commandments, with these words at the head of them, *I am the Lord thy God?* How early does pride and self-will, impatience of restraint, contempt of parents, and contradiction to their commands, appear in the child? And what is the man but a slave to his passions, governed by his interest, devoted to the world, and resolved to have his fill of it, without any serious regard to, or desire of a better? What is the earth at this day but a theatre of war and contention, nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, to the distress, impoverishment, ruin, and deaths of many thousands in all parts of the world? And the sufferers themselves, however pitied they may be, what are they but retaliated in kind, seeing they have the same blood-thirsty disposition, as eagerly engage in war, just or unjust, concur

concur as heartily in carrying it on, as their enemies, and would inflict the same sufferings upon others which fall to their lot? Domestic peace, and family union, where the obligations to it are more peculiarly sacred, and the ties of nature strong, how frequently is it broken for mere trifles, and when once broken hardly ever to be restored? Trade, how is it promoted and extended, from east to west, but by violence, usurpation, and bloodshed? What frauds are practised in bying and selling, what barefaced, shameless contempt of law and conscience prevails almost universally in robbing the Customs? Resentment, envy, malice, revenge, the clashing of interests, and the universal slander of evil tongues, what disturbance do they create in neighbourhoods, what unhappiness do they bring upon mankind, and how surely do they destroy every man's own peace and self-enjoyment? So that we need not go far from home, nor look any where but in our own times, to know what the wickedness of the old world was; the same nature lives, the same corruption reigns in us, and where the strength of it is not subdued by divine grace, will always be productive of the same effects. All the wisdom of it is from beneath, and what that is

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St. James tells us, *earthly, sensual, devilish*. We say when we meet in this place that we believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; professing by these words that as our God, Father, and Maker, he has a sovereign right to govern and dispose of us, and is entitled to our love, willing subjection, and faithful obedience. But there is little of this belief appearing in our practice, or written in our minds. I might ask you one by one whether you make it your business to study the commands of God, or ever came to this determination with yourselves that you would receive and be governed by them, all and every one of them, because they are his commands. If it is but the bare request of a friend, or parent, it is respected and remembered, whilst the commands of our Maker are slighted; and as to an inward reverence, esteem, and love of him, we find by experience that it is far from being the true bent of our minds. I do not mean that we always disobey him, and go contrary to his commands in every thing, for our own interest and convenience in many cases will not suffer us to do it; but how few are there, even with the rule of scripture in their hands, who govern themselves
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by a steady regard to his will, live in his presence, trust in his promises, give him the chief place in their affections, and take him for the God of their hearts? Not doing this is our corruption and sin, and the cause of all the injustice, disorder, and violence that is in the world; and though we are not amongst the foremost in wickedness, but even behave ourselves so as to gain the respect and esteem of men, yet if we have not an eye to God, and are not seeking his blessing and favour in all we do, we are corrupt in the deep ground of our hearts, and, so long as we continue thus alienated from him, abominable in his sight. I fear you do not understand me; but perhaps you may when I have said a few words more. The text says, *it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* This was a sad reproach to the men of that age, and the forerunner of a heavy sentence. But then it does not only belong to them of whom it was particularly spoken, but to all other men and women, at all times, in all places, who are in the same condition; to us, if it is ours. And that we are naturally in the same condition I am endeavouring to convince you, by shewing not only that evil abounds in the earth

earth in all ages, among us at this day, as it did before the flood ; but chiefly and especially from this consideration, that though we may not be chargeable with gross wickedness, nor vicious in our outward practice, yet we still mind earthly things, and set our affections upon them, to the neglect of God, and our interest in him. You see no great harm in this, no cause of repentance, no necessity of looking out for a change of your state ; but nevertheless you see it is the very thing which Christ points us to, as the sin of those who lived before the flood ; and it is certainly our sin as much as it was theirs, if the world has the same possession of our hearts. God knows what he made us for, and what we should be. He made us for himself, and for a life of godliness, in the knowledge and love of him ; but if we are not so persuaded and so disposed, whatever else we are, or whatever it is that keeps us from him, he knows that *the imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually*, and our works so far from being pleasant and acceptable to him, that, however we may struggle against the truth, they have the nature of sin. But you will say, is there no difference ? Is not one who lives orderly and reputably

putably in a better condition than those who live in open sin? Is not he who has regard to the law of chastity better than a fornicator, or adulterer? Is not a sober man better than a drunkard, or an honest man, who has regard to his word, better than a cheat, or a liar? Yes doubtless, both in the sight of God and man, and with regard to this world he will find his account in it; but if the main thing is still wanting, a heart for God, instead of the world, the flesh, and the creature, he is in no better a condition with respect to his eternal salvation. The decent, sober part of mankind call this hard judging; not taking the scripture for their rule, nor considering that the law of God consists of two parts, our duty to God and man, and that if we are never so exact in the latter, if we are temperate in meat and drink, righteous in our dealings with men, and observe the law of kindness in our actions, still there is another sacred part of the law; we must be godly too, by cleaving to God in our hearts, wills, and desires, or else we are continual breakers of the first and great commandment, and liable to condemnation. Consider now what you are doing, and what foundation you can be upon for life, when you are without God in
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the world, unawakened, unconverted, and still in that fallen condition in which St. Paul tells us all mankind are lying till they repent, and turn from the error of their way. He says, *there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.* Rom. iii. 11. Alas! we must own it to be the truth. We have other thoughts in our heads, and other designs in the world, than living to God, and securing our portion in him. We must confess that till a great change has been wrought in us, fearing, trusting, loving, and worshipping him in spirit and in truth, is not the prevailing habit, and ruling temper of our souls. You will not be at a loss to know what I mean, if you call to mind how backward you are to prayer, how sadly you neglect the scriptures, how little you improve and delight in your Sabbaths, how seldom you sit down to think of God and your souls, how little comfort you find in the hope of living with him for ever; nay, what despisers you are of religion and godliness, wherever you see a better form of it than your own. Not that it is usual for men to stop here, or to have nothing in their hearts and lives displeasing to God besides neglect of duty to him. For it is by the fear of the Lord
that

that men depart from evil, and without a religious regard to him they have nothing to restrain them from it but their own interest and convenience; which is keeping the law in their own hands, and will set them at liberty to sin as much as they please. From hence it comes to pass that wickedness abounds in the world, and that even the better part of it do not govern themselves in all respects by the law of conscience. For let them pretend what they please, if they do not set God always before them, and make it the settled aim of their lives to come to the everlasting enjoyment of him, they will be found sadly wanting in their duty so far as it relates to man. But put the case at the best, if they are strict, moral men, and unblameable in the eye of the world, yet why must God be the only Being who has not his due from them? Why does such horrid depravity escape your notice? If he says to every son and daughter of Adam, *give me thy heart*, why do we withhold it from him, and how can he bless us and be our God, while we do? Oh! let us see and be well aware of this foul stain and great blemish of our nature, this mother sin, and the root of all sin. Let us confess the wretchedness of our
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condition, and the greatness of our guilt, in withdrawing ourselves from the God that made us, chusing the world instead of him, and living all our days without him. Let us bring our state to this test, if we would have comfort of it, or hope towards God. Our outward behaviour is the only proof we can give to others of the soundness of our religion; but it is no proof in the case to ourselves, without an inward consciousness that the bent of our wills, and the strength of our desires, is to God and heavenly things. For here lies the point of conversion; it is returning to the duty and allegiance we owe to God, to a state of friendship and communion with him, to the love and esteem of him, with desire to be made partakers of his holiness, and enriched by him with all spiritual blessings. And if it could be supposed that we had no other sin but the want of this disposition toward God, it is full proof of our corruption, and if it is not acknowledged and repented of will give us up to the misery of eternal separation from him. This is what all who are truly awakened by the Spirit do acknowledge and repent of. They see plainly what a lamentable condition of alienation from God they are fallen into; that they have
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not honoured him according to the greatness of his name, nor been thankful for his benefits, nor trusted all their concerns in his hands, nor lived in his fear, nor govern'd themselves by his law, nor had a single eye to his work; that when they worship'd him, it was only with their lips, they did not know what they were doing, it was not a drawing nigh to him with their hearts; and when they prayed to him to cleanse the thoughts of their hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit, that they might perfectly love him, turn from the world, forsake all sin, and become new creatures, they would have been sorry that he should have taken them at their word; that the knowledge of God has not been their study, and that as to any delight in him, desire to be like him, and hope of being happy in him, they have been utter strangers to it. And this knowledge of themselves, now opened to their minds, fills them with shame and concern. If they could justify themselves before men, in respect of their behaviour in the world, as they never can when Christ, the great searcher, comes to sit in judgment upon them, yet this can give no ease in the case; their forgetfulness, neglect, and contempt of

God, and shutting him out of their hearts, as it is a sin of a deep die in itself, so it is now with them, and laid upon them as their burden; and till the guilt of it is removed from them by some means or other, they know there is no flying from those dreadful words, *it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* Is this your state, and do you see no evil in it, nor fear none? Has the God who made you no right in you, nor love from you? Is he an unknown God to you, as to the turning of your wills to him, or any experience you have of his blessing, grace, and work of power upon your souls? And yet if you have not taken him for the God of your hearts, this is your state as sure as you were born; and if you do not know, and repent of it, and betake yourselves to your remedy, you will die blind, sinful, and unconverted. If you are not a notorious, open sinner, but a civil, humane man, rational and sober, you are just what many of the heathens were before the preaching of the Gospel, and many are in all places where the sound of it never came, but not yet a disciple of the faith, *renewed in the spirit of your mind, and* looking

looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Eph. iv. 23. Jud. 21.

III. The third thing proposed was to shew how we came into the state of apostasy from God which we are in by nature.

Man was made in the image of God, upright and innocent, with all such perfections of body and mind as God pronounced to be very good, and with full power to preserve himself in the happy state in which he was created, by an unfinning obedience; to the end that when he had fulfilled his days in a paradise upon earth, he might be translated to a higher paradise, or a state of everlasting glory in heaven. But by transgressing the law which had been given him, in one forbidden act, he forfeited all right and title to the promise of life. The covenant which God made with him was broken on his part, his claim of obedience was gone for ever; and so *sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, Rom. v. 12. death spiritual and temporal, and without the mercy of God, death eternal. The death of his soul to the life and likeness of God, or it's fall from God into a state purely natural, which was the worst part of his sentence, took place immediately in the very

day and hour of his disobedience, as God had forewarned him ; and we, as his children, come into the world in the same condition of corruption and weakness which he found himself to be in after his fall, and, as David confesseth for himself and all mankind, *are conceived and born in sin*. Ps. li. 5. Sin has taken possession of our nature, and our subjection to it is what an apostle calls *the law in our members warring against the law of God*. Rom. vii. 23. It is a wonderful strong expression of our slavery to sin. He tells us that it is a law in our members ; he means, that it has as full force and power in and over us, as if we really took it for the only law we are bound to, and yielded ourselves wholly to it. And again he says, it *warreth against the law of God*, stubbornly opposing him and his will, and setting itself in battle array against him, as one enemy does against another. We should have been utterly at a loss to account for this enmity of our nature to the will and law of God, if the scripture had not told us how we came into this state. But we find by woeful experience that we are in it, and the best thing we can do is to let our consciences bear witness to the truth of it. Look at yourselves, at
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your hearts and lives, at the state of your own souls ; read and consider what St. Paul says in the first and third chapters of his epistle to the Romans and elsewhere, of the great and general corruption of mankind ; do not deny the charge he brings against every soul of man, on account of some little difference of outward behaviour, in which you may excel many others, but think more especially how you stand affected towards God ; let this part of scripture which reveals to us our bondage, danger, and misery in sin have it's due weight with you ; and then you will be prepared for that other part of it, which discovers to us the way and means of our redemption from this unhappy condition, and brings us the glad tidings of help and deliverance.

IV. Which I am now briefly to set before you, and with the help of God shall open more fully in some of the following discourses. Let me just remind you at present of what we read Acts v. When the angel of the Lord opened the prison doors to the apostles, he said to them, *go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life*, that is, of life in and through Christ Jesus. Then, if there is

any sense, truth, or virtue in these words, we are naturally destitute of spiritual life, must have it restored to us, understand how it is done, and heartily embrace the helps and means which are revealed to us for that purpose. It is my desire to have this awakening passage of scripture continually sounding in my ears, and I pray God speak it to all our hearts. Life! life! dearly purchased for us, and freely offered to us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, by nature the children of wrath, and outcasts from God and heaven: what can we desire, what should we think of, but to be recovered to it, and put ourselves in the way of receiving the invaluable blessing at God's hands? All Scripture turns upon these three great points, the Fall of man, the Desert of sin, and the Grace of God in delivering us from it. Do but admit the two former of these points, namely, that we are fallen from the happy state in which man was created into a state of great disorder, corruption, and weakness, and that if the guilt of our sin is not taken away it will ruin us for ever, and you will see the necessity of some mighty help; if you are made sensible of the deadly nature of sin, and of your own sinfulness, by spiritual conviction, you

you will fly to it in the peril of your souls, be very thankful to God for it, and use it to the ends for which it is given. You will understand that as Christ took our curse upon himself, made full satisfaction to the divine justice, and paid the price of our redemption with his blood; so if he had not been made a curse for us, and bore the whole weight of God's vengeance against sin in his own person, the words of the text, so grievous to hear, so dreadfully alarming, must have continued in force against us for ever, *it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.* My brethren, their sin grieved him, it always grieves him; our sin grieves him, because he sees nothing in it but ruin and destruction. He knows it will rob his creatures of their peace and happiness, destroy their title to the glory he made them for, and plunge them into an abyss of misery. On which account he is said to be grieved; not that he is less happy in himself for any thing we do, but that we might know and consider the sorrow, and trouble, and grief everlasting we shall bring upon ourselves by sinning against him. Alas! we do; and whatever was the sin of men before the flood, whether it was greater or not than

than it is at present, we have still cause to lament the prevalence of it, and fear the terrible justice of God, here called his grief, which I have told you is only another word for our misery. And how great it will be if we do not take warning to prevent it, we may judge from the greatness of his mercy, and the way in which deliverance comes to us. For, blessed be God, his compassions fail not; and though there never was an age of which it might not be said, *it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart*, yet at the same time it repented him of the evil that was to fall upon us, his bowels yearned over us, and to the praise of the glory of his grace he hath not given us up to the desert and punishment of our sin, he hath not left us to perish for ever without remedy, he hath revived us with the hope of the Gospel; the sum of which is, that our deliverance is by pardon, and pardon by Jesus Christ; and faith, or acceptance of the grace in conviction of sin, repentance, and humility, is the heart's recovery to God.

I would now exhort you, dearly beloved, to consider and apply what has been delivered from these words, *it repented the Lord*

that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. It must be plain to every understanding that God did not repent of his having made man, so far as he was his own workmanship, for he saw it to be *very good*; but man had corrupted himself, and was become a quite different creature from what he was originally, and it is here said that the Lord was grieved for it at his heart. Nothing can more fully express the misery of our condition in sin; and yet to the shame and reproach of our nature, as the fallen children of Adam we are all in it, and *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.* Gen. viii. 21. Where observe that this is not spoken only or chiefly, of those who lived before the flood, or perished in it; because it is given as the reason why the Lord *would not again curse the ground any more for man's sake*; (compare Gen. ix. 11.) and therefore must necessarily be understood of those who lived after the flood, or the state of mankind at all times. If we had no other guilt besides that of forgetfulness of God, contempt of spiritual blessings, and the worldliness of our hearts, it is enough to make good the charge against us. For if we had continued in the image of God, we should have taken
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him for our Lord and Governor, made him our portion, delighted in his service, and lived in a state of holy communion with him upon earth, till we had been ripe for heaven. But alas ! the malady does not stop here ; I mean only in our neglect of God, and heavenly things. For David says of mankind, and St. Paul after him, and both by direction of the Holy Ghost, *they are altogether become unprofitable and abominable ;* Ps. xiv. 3. Rom. iii. 12. *foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.* Tit. iii. 3. These again are St. Paul's words, and the wickedness which prevails in the world at all times, the heart of every natural man, bears full testimony to these assertions of the inspired Penman. In this lamentable state of our nature God beheld us with an eye of pity ; and sent his only begotten Son into the world to rescue and to save us, to die for us and live in us, to make reconciliation for our sins, to be the Lord our righteousness, and bring our straying hearts back again to God in love. He is now preached and offered to you for this end ; and you have your choice either to be the children of God in him, holy and beloved, or to be of the number of those

those of whom it may be said to the last, at the hour of death and the day of judgment, it repenteth the Lord that ever he made them, and it grieveth him at his heart. Why, if he is grieved, with reverence be it spoken, cannot he find out a way to please himself? Yes; but it will be to the utter destruction of all such; and as Christ wept over the devoted city of Jerusalem, but would not save it from the miseries which were coming upon it, so there is no mercy in God to plead against his justice for those who do not reverence his Son, and take him for their Saviour from the guilt and power of sin. Why then will you die? Why will you be the men or women of whom these words are spoken? Can you bear to think it? Why then will you not accept of deliverance from the unhappy, perishing state you are in? You think verily you do; and perhaps there are none here present who will take the words of the text to themselves. But as it is for life or death eternal, be not deceived; and you need not, if you would but take notice of the few words more I have to say. If Christ is precious to you as your only deliverer from the guilt and ruin of your sin, and you trust in him for holiness as well as

forgiveness, you have nothing to fear; your state is good, begin how or when it will, you are a Christian, and may welcome death. But if you are ignorant of Christ and his salvation, and therefore certainly without faith in him; if you do not see the necessity of being recovered out of the state of corruption and helplessness you are in by nature; if you deny your sin, or disbelieve what God tells you of the curse of it, or do not repent of it, or think any thing but Christ can take it away; if you do not love the Scriptures, and pray sincerely for the grace of the Spirit, to guide you into the truth, to keep your heart close to God's commandments, and make you a new creature: then what is here said of God's repenting that he made man, must be read thus—it repenteth the Lord that he made you. His repenting will be your own bitter, though too late repentance; what is called his grief, you will find to be *your* grief, and the never dying worm at your heart.

Let me in conclusion remind you that this is the first day of Passion week; so called, because in it our Lord suffered to save us all from the curse of the text, *it repented the Lord that*

that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. To call us to the right improvement of this holy week, the church has provided a service for every day of it, with suitable epistles and gospels, supposing that to attend upon it is our duty, and that all would do so who are turned or turning to God. If you are really hinder'd by necessary business, in the field, by daily labour, or otherwise, I have not a word to say in the case; but if your consciences tell you that you are not, and might well spare an hour for the worship of God, and yet you never think of it, consider, I beseech you, which way your hearts are bent. Besides, if the master has a reasonable excuse, the mistress may not; some one or more of the family might be spared to attend upon the service of the church in the name of the rest; and I cannot but recommend it to you to take order for it, that we might have something like a Christian appearance among us, which at present we have not. I have read of one *Mr. Herbert*, whose endeavours were so bless'd to his parishioners, that it is said they would many a time and oft leave their plough, when they heard what they called *Mr. Herbert's bell ring to prayers;*

prayers ; and I do not believe that any of them were a farthing poorer at the year's end for carrying God's blessing with them to their work. The bells have no such sound here. But whatever excuses you may have to plead for yourselves at other times, sure I am that this season calls for some regard from you ; and regard it you would, if the one thing needful was uppermost in your thoughts. Let *Good Friday* especially be wholly a day for your souls. Think why it is so called, and think only how to make it a good day to yourselves, by laying aside all other business to turn your eyes and hearts to the Lord of glory, who was thereon crucified for you. Think what dead worldlings you are, and what a shame it is that you should be all for your bodies, and *labouring for the meat that perisheth*, at the very time of the day when Jesus, he whom you call your Saviour, was hanging upon the cross to save you from the eternal death both of body and soul. When he ordained the Sacrament of his Supper, he said, *do this in remembrance of me*. My brethren, he has done something to be remembered by us in that, and all other respects ; but if we will not, and thereby
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shew plainly that we neither know him, nor love him, nor desire any of his benefits, we must not hope to be remembered by him when he cometh to judgment in the last act of his kingdom. The Lord call us into it here, that we may be happy in it for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N II.

JOHN V. 39.

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.

IT is evident that by the Scriptures here our Lord could only mean the Scriptures of the Old Testament, since no other part of them was written till after his death. And it is as evident also that he here intends to assert, that the Scriptures of the Old Testament *do* testify of him as the Saviour of the world, by whom life and immortality is to be obtained, or redemption from sin, and death the consequence of it. I shall,

I. Give you some opening into this matter.

II. And proceed to shew what farther use we are to make of these words. Help us, O Lord, this day ; for if thou dost not open our hearts to attend to the Scriptures,
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and so to understand them as to find the Lord Jesus Christ revealed in them, and by them to our souls, thy mercy in delivering them to us will be lost upon us, and we shall die in our sins.

I. The first thing I am to do, is briefly to open to you what is here affirmed by our Lord, that the great design of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, was to testify of Him as the Restorer of life to lost mankind. *Search the Scriptures*, says he; *for in them ye think* (and think truly) *ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me*; as the sole fountain, author, and giver of the life which all want, and for which we must search the Scriptures, if we know the use and intent of them. I say, the Scriptures of the Old Testament; the Jews, to whom these words were spoken, having no other. And this is the point here to be opened, viz. that the Scriptures of the Old Testament do so testify of *Him*. Which will appear plain to you at once, if you consider what is said of St. Paul, Act. xvii. 2, 3. *and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, (the Jews in their synagogue) and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging that*

Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ. Observe; it was his manner, the method he constantly used, to reason with the Jews out of their own Scriptures, and to prove to them from thence, that Jesus was the Christ, the Redeemer they expected. And therefore certainly he was revealed in them as such, or else the ground of all the Apostle's reasoning would have been false. Again, it is said of Apollos, Acts xviii. 24, 25. that being mighty in the Scriptures, he was instructed in the way of the Lord. This was the fruit of his knowledge and study of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, (for he had no other) that he found Christ in them. And to put this matter out of all doubt, I need only mention to you farther what we read Luke xxiv. 45, 46, 47. Then opened he (Jesus) their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, (viz. because it was so written) and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations. So that according to Christ's own knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures of the Old Testament,

Testament, salvation by him was therein opened and revealed. And I shall now shew you very briefly in what parts of it more especially he was so revealed.

When our first parents had broken the Covenant of life which God made with them, by transgressing his command, their forfeiture, supposing him to be just and true, was unavoidable. And accordingly death entered into the world by sin; they had lost their title to life and immortality, and without restoration from the unhappy condition into which they had brought themselves, both they and all their posterity, must have perished eternally. This they could not do for themselves; they could do nothing to recover their original state, and restore themselves to the divine favour, and therefore God, at the same time that he pronounced their sentence, had in mercy provided a remedy, which he declared to them, for their trust and comfort, in these remarkable words: *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. *i. e.* one of their posterity, peculiarly so called because he was to be made of a woman, should by himself undo the effect of their sin, and deliver them from the curse they had brought upon themselves, by yielding

to the temptation of the devil in the form of a serpent. Here, I say, is a promise of deliverance from the curse of the Fall, and of the great Redeemer, Jesus Christ; which we may suppose was more fully explained to them, and would be carefully explained by them to their children. So that all mankind from the beginning were instructed in this promise; and all who looked for redemption walked with God, and performed all their acts of worship in the faith of it, as the great foundation of their hope.

The next instance I shall mention, is the renewal of this promise to Abraham, that *in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. Gen. xii. 3. xxii. 18. And for the confirmation of his faith, and the faith of others, he was commanded to slay his son, and had a ram substituted in his stead, when he was upon the point of doing it: that in this transaction he might behold as it were with his eyes the very manner of our deliverance, by the sacrifice of Christ. For so our Lord himself tells us he *saw his day, and was glad*. John viii. 56. And thus as Isaac, whose name signifies laughter, or spiritual joy, had the promise of a Redeemer settled upon him, so of his two sons, it was settled and entailed upon Jacob; and again, of all his

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his sons, only upon Judah ; and again, of his tribe, upon the person and family of David. Not that the rest of them, or any others, were hereby excluded from the benefit of the Redeemer ; but it was done by way of solemn renewal and repetition of the great promise, and to mark out the line by which it was to be conveyed to the rest of mankind. Another very express testimony of which we have delivered to us by Moses, Deut. xviii. 15. *a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren like unto me ; unto him shall ye hearken : him,* who in the days of his flesh was declared by a voice from heaven to be the Son of God, and the very Prophet whom all should hear. And that the Jews might want no information in this great article of faith, on which the salvation of mankind turned, they had a great number of sacrifices and ceremonies appointed, to bring the promised seed to their remembrance in every part of their worship ; and the high priest in particular was ordained for a figure, or standing memorial of the great high priest of our profession, and was Christ himself, as it were, continually present with them : Aaron, and every high priest after him, bearing the names of the children of Israel in the breast-

plate of judgment upon his heart, as Jesus Christ, our Advocate, bears the names of his people continually upon *his* heart before God. To these, and many other testimonies which might be mentioned, if we add that of the psalms and prophecies, which speak so largely and plainly of the Redeemer, his person, character, and offices, the time of his coming, birth, sufferings, and death ; we shall perceive that St. Paul knew very well what he said, and had good warrant for these words, Rom. xv. 4. *whatsoever things were written aforetime* (meaning chiefly, if not solely, in the Old Testament) *were written for our learning ; that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* My brethren, the blessed hope of peace and reconciliation with God, of restoration to life, of happiness and salvation, through him who is the hope of all the ends of the earth, and who alone could do this great thing for us, Jesus Christ the righteous. For *to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* Acts x. 43. That mankind might have hope towards God, notwithstanding their corruption and death by the Fall, this promise was given to them from the beginning.

They all set out with it at first, and might have kept it; and when it was in danger of being lost or obscured, it was repeated and renewed in the several ages of the world. For there is but one Saviour, and one salvation for all men. There never was *any other name under heaven given unto men whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. And those who lived before the coming of Christ, and continued stedfast in the belief of the promised seed, had their faith imputed to them for righteousness, and were equally entitled to the benefit of redemption by Christ, with those who lived after his appearance in the flesh. It was in the strength of this faith, that the Worthies we read of Heb. xi. were such shining examples of courage, patience, self-denial, and all kinds of holiness. They lived and died in the same common faith, looked for acceptance with God, and life only in virtue of the promise, despised every thing else in comparison of their great and glorious hope, and the eternal inheritance in heaven which it ensured to them, and for the sake of it willingly exposed themselves to all manner of persecution and suffering from an unbelieving world.

What I have suggested under this head
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will not be in vain, if it puts any lover of Scripture upon tracing out the evidence of this point in its full extent.

II. Let us now consider what farther use we are to make of the words of the text: *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me.* And what I have to say under this head, shall be delivered to you in the following observations.

I. St. Paul says, *the Lord Jesus Christ is our hope.* 1 Tim. i. 1. He means our only hope; for if there had been any other for sinful lost mankind, he would certainly have told us by commandment from God what it is. You have heard how the promise of a Redeemer from sin and death was declared from the beginning, embraced and trusted in by those who had only the Scriptures of the Old Testament to be the foundation of their faith and hope. Now what cause have we of thankfulness to Almighty God, who have the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, and thereby a much clearer and stronger light put into our hands, to guide us into the way of life and salvation by Jesus Christ? The New Testament being to the Old what full corn in the ear is to the seed, its ripening

ing and perfection. What was darkly delivered, and in some measure lay hid in the one, was fully opened, explained, and verified by the other. So that we have greatly the advantage in point of instruction and information in what it so much concerns us to know, above those who lived before the coming of Christ. Was deliverance promised by the seed of the woman? We know who that seed was, and why so called, viz. because he was born of a virgin. Was it foretold that the great Redeemer when he came, instead of appearing in the pomp and state of a messenger from heaven, as might have been expected, should be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? In the history of his life, answering in all respects to this description, we read of nothing, from his humble birth in a manger to his painful death upon the cross, but poverty, labour, sufferings, and contempt from the world. Was it said that he should bruise the serpent's head? We are clearly told how he did so, Heb. ii. 14. viz. by the sacrifice of himself; *that through death he might overcome him that had the power of death, that is, the devil:* who brought death upon all mankind, and would for ever have held them
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under it, if the Son of God by his death had not set them free. I say, let us observe, and be thankful for our advantage, in the clearer light we enjoy; and also, with how much greater force our Lord's admonition, to search the Scriptures, comes to us. *God spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets*; and they had reason to rejoice in the discoveries he made to them. But it is a much greater blessing to us, that he hath spoken to us by his Son; that the day-spring from on high hath visited us, and that we know the truth and full accomplishment of what our Lord tells us *so many prophets, righteous men, and kings, desired to see.*

2. I would observe to you from the words of the text, that the one great design of *all* Scripture is to testify of Christ, that we have life by him. In this chapter, ver. 25, speaking of his work and office in the world, he says, *the hour cometh, and (N. B.) now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live, i. e.* they who are dead in trespasses and sins, and under a sentence of death, shall be released from that sentence, and restored to a capacity of eternal life, by hearing his voice, or believing in him as the Christ the Son of
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the living God, having life in himself, and power to communicate it to all who belong to him. The life which God gave to man at his creation, and would for ever have preserved to him in case of obedience, was forfeited by sin; *and so*, as the Scripture plainly tells us, *death passed upon all men.* Rom. v. 12. and if *the wages of sin*, of every sin *is death*, even death eternal, Rom. vi. 23. we have made that sentence our own over and over again, by our transgressions of the law of God, and pulled death upon our heads every day of our lives. Now seeing that this is our unhappy condition under the Fall, ask yourselves the question; What must recover us from it, who shall work our deliverance? Ourselves? So do then; work for life. But remember withal these two things, that in this way the work of your obedience must be perfect; and again, if you could perform it, as you certainly never will, it cannot reverse the sentence of death you are already under, not only for the sin of our first parents, but the countless sum of your own. Fancy to yourselves the greatest saint that ever lived; and what has he done for the delivery of his soul from that sentence of death which is gone out against all flesh? He will still have sins
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which he can never answer for to the justice of God. Adam's curse still stands in the Bible, and is always in force against us for any thing we can do to help ourselves. On both these accounts Christ must have died to save him, if there never had been another man in the world. And God, who perfectly knows our condition of guilt and weakness, does not require it of us that we should by any will, work, or endeavours of our own, recover ourselves out of the dead state we are in by nature, but offers us life in his Son. And if we will not take him at his word, and receive the mercy at his hands, the work of our salvation must be at a stand for ever; for we are as unable to restore to ourselves the life we have lost, as a dead body is to raise itself out of the grave. I beseech you, understand this great, leading truth of our religion, by which we are saved; for it signifies but little what else you learn from Scripture, if you do not find Christ therein revealed for life. It is true, he has explained and enforced the commandments. He strictly requires obedience to them, and enables us to perform it in a much better manner than we could do without him, in a natural state; and the recovery of our wills to God in truth and
sincerity,

sincerity, is a necessary and very precious part of our salvation by him. But this, in the highest state of a pure obedience we shall ever attain to, is not, cannot be our righteousness in the sight of God, nor right to eternal life; concerning which I shall have occasion to speak something more under another head.

3. Let me observe to you, that the life we all want is so only and altogether in Jesus, that it is not in the Scriptures. My meaning is, that the Scripture has not eternal life in itself, but only acquaints us how it is to be obtained, and where we are to go for it. It is altogether insufficient for this end, and no more life in this sense, than I am for reading or preaching it to you. If you were sick of a mortal distemper, and had a book put into your hands describing the nature of it, and at the same time fully informing you of the impossibility of a cure without going to a certain Physician; you would not look for your cure only by reading the book, but be directed by it to go where it is to be had. Behold then the great design, use, and excellence of Scripture. It tells us of our disease, leads us to the root of it, discovers it's deadly nature, and our utter inability to help ourselves,

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points out to us the infallible Physician, guides us to Christ, as the star did the wise men from the east, and condemns all other methods of cure. To him then we must go, as the blind, the lame, the lepers did, when he was upon earth, tell him of our case, and say as they did, every one of us for ourselves, *Lord, help me. Search the Scriptures*, said he to the Jews, *for in them ye think ye have eternal life*. So they had; so have we; but how? by receiving their testimony concerning *him* as that life. Mark what he says farther in the following verse; *and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*. The meaning is plain; if we stop short of him, we do nothing; and though we are never so much in earnest, without going directly to him for life, we can only bewilder ourselves all our days in a vain search after it. Discharge from condemnation, sonship, victory over death, and power to obey from the heart, which are the things of our life; as I said before, where can we find them, and how are they to be obtained, but by going to Christ for them, who alone is our peace, righteousness, salvation and strength? And I observe this to you, because it is both the necessary and the hard point in our religion. It is

a fore trial to the soul, and what the generality never come to; to see itself condemned and helpless, to know it's death in sin, and deadness of power. Here we shrink back, would fain help ourselves in some way of our own, try all expedients, and do not chuse to go to Christ for the life we want, and he alone can give. But when we do, we are in the true Scripture way, in God's way of help, and cannot fail of our remedy. Now we are at the door of faith; and if we continue knocking it will be opened to us, and give us such a saving view of Christ and his benefits, as will be the support and comfort of our lives.

4. For in the next place, we may take notice that the way in which Christ becomes our life, is, and can only be by Faith. If salvation is wrought out for us, and a gift freely bestowed upon us, we must receive it as such, under an unfeigned, lowly sense of our utter inability to procure it for ourselves, and with many thanksgivings to God for so unspeakable a mercy. If it is brought and offered to us, we may stretch out our hands to take it; and this is the very thing which is required of us, to put us in possession of it. Christ said to one, *be not afraid, only believe*; and to another, *if*

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thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. Mark v. 36, ix. 23. They wanted a bodily cure; and as they could not help themselves, faith in the grace and power of Jesus was the only method in which they could receive it. We want discharge from the guilt of sin, and deliverance from death; and how can this much greater salvation come to us but in the same way of believing? Hear the Scripture; *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* Acts xvi. 31. Believe that thou art lost and undone in thyself, believe that Christ died for thee by the will of God, believe that he bore thy sins in his own body on the cross, believe against all thy unworthiness, and all thy fears, that he did not leave so much as one of them behind to torment and sting thee to death, believe that in him, and him only, thou art restored to the favour of God, and to the power of an endless life, by a participation of his righteousness, as a member of his body, and thou shalt be a saved man. The same Apostle says, *I live by the faith of the Son of God;* Gal. ii. 20. and another as full to the same purpose, *these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through him*

his name. John xx. 31. Indeed, my brethren, these, and many such like passages of holy writ, if you will understand them in their natural, easy import, and in connection with the Scripture doctrine of man's original sin, accumulated guilt, condemnation and helplessness, are very, very comfortable and reviving, to those who have the sentence of death in themselves, and know how unable they are to reverse it; but in effect rejected by all who fly to their sincerity, good meanings, repentance, or purposes of obedience, instead of acknowledging the truth of their case as fallen sinners, knowing God as he has revealed himself, giving him the glory of his grace, and ascribing the work of redemption solely to Christ. I know it is said that the grand design of his coming into the world was to reform it; and to bring mankind to heaven and happiness by recovering them to holiness; he having made the way to it more easy, and put it in their power to attain it, by instructing them in the knowledge of the one true God, setting before them a perfect rule of duty, enforcing it by a clear and express revelation of rewards and punishments in a future state, and enabling them by supernatural assistance to discharge it. Bless-

ed be God for all this ! Accursed is he who denies it ; and may the God of all grace put it in the hearts of his servants faithfully to improve these singular benefits, to adorn their profession, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by abounding in the work of the Lord. But these are not the most distinguishing peculiarities of the gospel ; this, in it's highest state of perfection, is not a justifying righteousness, this is not the redemption and life of the soul, this is not the Scripture testimony to Christ, nor the great design, and ultimate end of his coming. Guilt was to be purged, the law was to be fulfilled in every jot and tittle of it, justice and mercy were to be reconciled and meet together in behalf of a world of condemned rebels, the serpent's head was to be bruised, death was to be abolished, and a way opened into heaven for sinners. Will you pretend, can you possibly believe that this is to be done, this work of omnipotence, by what you call your righteousness, and which you have more reason to be ashamed than boast of ? And is this all your glorying in Jesus, that he has put it in your power to be your own saviours, and obtain eternal redemption for yourselves, by abating of the rigour
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of the law, assisting you in the performance of what he demands, accepting of sincerity instead of perfect obedience, and upon the whole making our salvation depend upon lower and easier conditions than it did before? Why, the work is great and difficult beyond all conception. It was infinitely too high for any created being to accomplish; the highest angels have no might for it. None but the eternal Son of God could perform the great, indispensable condition of the covenant of life, *lo, I come to do thy will, O God*; none but he could fulfil the law, which must of all necessity be done in and for the human nature, before we could be reputed just in the sight of God; none but he could pay down the blood which was to be the price of our redemption, and cleanse us from all spot of sin; no other, in earth or heaven, could say, *it is finished, make reconciliation for iniquity, bring in everlasting righteousness*, break the strong bars of the grave, carry up our nature triumphantly with him into heaven, and stand in the same common relation of a Father to us for life that Adam did for death. No, O Jesus, thou seed of the woman, thou sweet and powerful name for condemned sinners, thou quickening Spirit, this is thy work

and thy praise. Thou tookest our nature upon thee to do great things for it, to rescue it out of the hands of the devil, to raise it from death, and sit down in it at the right hand of God; and what thou didst, was altogether in thy own person, and independently of any of thy creatures. Our peace, our life, was the fruit of thy labours, the reward of thy obedience, the purchase of thy blood, and not any thing which we are enabled to do for ourselves. Thanks be to God therefore, *who delivered up his own Son for us all*, to do what we could not, and to suffer what we should have suffered; that *believing in him as dying for our offences, and raised again for our justification*, confessing our absolute unworthiness, and renouncing every claim of our own to a salvation which is wholly the work of another hand, we might have life through his name. For so, as I am observing to you, we become united to his satisfaction and merits, and are made partakers of his life, in the reality, virtue, and power of it, being *so joined to the Lord as to be one spirit* with him. And you now see why so great stress is laid upon faith in Scripture, and why *it is impossible to please God without it*; because it is acknowledging God to be what he is, in his holiness,

justice, and mercy; Christ to be what he is, in the glory of his undertaking for sinners; the Spirit to be what he is, in his principal office of revealing Christ to the soul for life, as first revealed by him in Scripture; ourselves to be what we are, in our wretched condition of guilt and helplessness: it is because without it we deny the truth of God, and whatever else we do in his worship and service, can only approach him with a lie in our mouths; it is because Christ is freely given to us, and therefore we must receive him in all humility as a gift, beholding him with the eye of faith as *the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*, trusting in God as saving us by the grace of a Redeemer, and receiving us to the fellowship of his life, death, and resurrection.

If you should ask what the faith is by which we receive Christ, and are engrafted into him for life? I answer, the very same that was imputed to Abraham for righteousness—belief of God's promise for the effecting of a natural impossibility, and unfeigned joyful acquiescence in it. Isaac was the blessing promised to Abraham, against the course of nature; Jesus is the Son born, and given to all, that *against hope believing in hope, and though in ourselves vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,*

destruction, we may become children and heirs of God, in his right, and in virtue of the promise. Faith therefore, in the simple, obvious meaning of the word, is cordial assent to the testimony of God in Scripture concerning the method of our salvation; when having been convinced of sin, it's deadly nature, and our own sinfulness, we can see no way to escape but by flying to the mercy of God in Christ, and gladly embrace it as the relief of our perishing souls. Have you this testimony of your own hearts to your acceptance of the Gospel remedy, that upon the call of God in his word you have come to Christ, as your hope, and the only Saviour of sinners? you need not doubt but that you *have the witness in yourselves*, and can say *that Jesus is the Lord by the Holy Ghost*; you may be as sure that he has wrought this faith in you, as when you see corn and other fruits of the earth come to maturity, you know it is by a blessing from above. Let not your hearts be troubled, let none take your peace from you, by directing you to inward speakings, feelings, or assurances, as the necessary proofs of your faith. They may be true, they may be false; they are not the general, scriptural evidences of faith. Supposing them

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them to be real, they are peculiar vouchsafements to particular persons, for reasons best known to God; but greatly mistaken by those who have them, when they prefer them to a heart-felt dependence on the infallible, abiding testimony of God in Scripture, with a sincere purpose of fidelity and subjection to the Lord Jesus, and much more when they make them the only tests of a saving faith. If you will build your comfort upon no other ground, you may go forrowing to your graves; and what is much to be lamented, you lay a fatal stumbling-block in the way of your Christian progress, by presuming, very unfavourably to yourselves, that as you have not yet received, and been received into Christ by faith, you have neither call nor ability to build up yourselves on it. I say again, have you under a sense of deserved condemnation fled to the name Jesus for safety? Are you come to him to the end he may save you from your sins, both from the guilt and power of them? Do you desire he should, do you think he can, do you believe he will, and that he was ordained and sent of God for this purpose? If this is your real belief and persuasion, though not in the highest measure, grounded on the word of God, and working

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ing in you as a living principle, deny it not; lest you wrong your souls, diminish your comfort, hinder your growth in grace, and withhold from God the due tribute of his praise for the knowledge, light, and faith he has given you. On the other hand, let none presume upon the goodness of their state on account of an outward decency of character, human accomplishments, or even regard to the rule of Scripture, without such a faith in Christ as lays them low in their own eyes, brings them to him in repentance for peace and acceptance with God, and makes him the chief ground of their rejoicing. And especially, let none derive hope from the Gospel without coming to Christ as a whole Saviour, with all their sins, with all their needs, for all his blessings, for a pure heart, as well as washing in his blood, and with earnest desire to be renewed by him to universal holiness. In order to which, and to prevent any suspicion of my slighting and undervaluing this necessary part of Christian salvation,

5. Let it be observed, that as we should search the Scriptures, to the end we may believe on the name and power of Jesus Christ, and come to him for the life of our souls; so we must likewise search them to know

know what he requires of us in all other respects, and what kind of life a true faith will produce in us. Pardon, and peace with God, salvation and eternal life by the grace and might of a Redeemer, without any merit of ours—there is the soul's rest, and the solid ground of our comfort. Believe this with the heart, as God wills and commands, and Christ is yours, to save you from death. But though we must consider this as peculiarly the glad tidings of the Gospel, and the relief of conscience labouring under a sense of guilt and unworthiness, and have the sacred art always to keep it separate in our minds from any work or obedience of our own; yet on the authority of the same Scriptures, which reveal him to us as a Saviour, and the Restorer of our life, we are obliged to submit to his teaching, and receive a law at his mouth. You cannot open the Bible without seeing how hateful sin is to God, what a curse it brings with it, how ruinous it is to all our hopes. The whole Scripture, from beginning to end, is nothing but a history of God's dealings with mankind on account of sin, of his will to punish it, or the methods he has taken to deliver us from it; and Christ's death upon the cross is such a full declaration of the

the heinous nature, and dreadful malignity of it, and of our certain doom if we continue in it, that it cannot but strike terror into us at the same time that it comforts and revives us. And if the instruction it conveys to us should not be sufficiently attended to, we cannot mistake the plain and positive command, to *add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For so—and not otherwise—an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 11. His kingdom of grace upon earth is a kingdom of redeemed souls, walking worthy of the mercy they have received, *shewing forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light* in all the fruits of a holy conversation; and though there will always be men of corrupt minds, turning the children's bread into poison to themselves, and denying the Lord that bought them in a fundamental article of his religion, yet the whole word of God stands up against them; and the faith which does not work by love, and sincerely endeavour

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your to keep the commandments, is as certainly false as that the Scripture is true. We read that he said to one, and another, who distrusted his power or will to help them, where is your faith? But much more may it be said of those, who pretend to believe in him, and yet disgrace their profession, by making little account of that holiness which he so earnestly recommends to them, and so strongly binds upon their hearts and consciences, as the work and proof of their faith. It is a severe rebuke from his mouth—and may he sharpen it to us all—*why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* Luke vi. 46. And surely, besides the authority of his commands, the obligations we have to him strongly plead for our obedience; and thus he calls for it, *if ye love me*—in the character of your Saviour, dying to redeem you, and the author of all your hopes—*keep my commandments.* John xiv. 15. I say, what a call is here to every gracious, Christian heart! How dead must all those be who do not hear it; and why do we talk of the goodness of them, when we cannot find one spark of gratitude in them for all he has done and suffered for us! He stooped very low to raise us from the dust, to take us out
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of the belly of hell, and exalt us to heaven. He could not change the nature of the Most High God, and pull down eternal Justice from its throne; but he could become man to satisfy it, and make a way for mercy to flow in upon us. He could not recal past sin, or make it to be what it is not, unworthy of punishment, but he could take our sin upon himself, and bear the whole weight of God's vengeance against us for it, in his own body on the cross. He could not make us our own saviours; and therefore he would save us by himself, and come into the world to be our life, and to be *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.* 1 Cor. i. 30. And in return for all this, he says, *keep my commandments*: still with a view only to the happiness of his creatures; and that their joy might be full, both in the sense of remission, and the recovery of their corrupt, and therefore miserable natures to the love of God and holiness.

Oh! then, *search the Scriptures*, both for faith and practice; that having the Lord Jesus Christ testified to your hearts, you may walk worthy of him unto all pleasing, and receive the kingdom of God as little children, by the full submission of your wills to

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to his and teaching authority. Let it not seem grievous to you to take that blessed Book, which is the Record of God's love and man's salvation, daily into your hands. Let your Sabbaths more especially be devoted to the sacred employment of reading it, with prayer to God that it may be opened to you in the fulness of Christ's blessings. If you had made the glad tidings it brings to sinners your hope, the study of it would be the delight of your souls; you would acquaint yourselves with it more and more, and receive directions from it, as well concerning that hope, as the way that leads to it, and the means of securing it. Your faith would be continually increasing, and your lives answerable to your faith. And if you do not thus value and pray over it, and give up your wills to God in the reading of it, it is a certain sign either that the Spirit's work never begun, or is at a stand with you. Certainly the knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent to give life unto the world, is not a matter of small moment; and as you will look for it in vain any where else but in the Spirit's treasury of holy Scripture, so if you do not look for it there with a care and diligence in some measure suitable to the importance

portance of it, you are yet unawakened, and unbelieving. I pray God those may not be vain words to you which you hear so often from the Litany; and that your hearts may answer to them now while I am speaking them to you again:

“That it may please thee to give to all thy people increase of grace to hear meekly thy word, and to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, we beseech thee to hear us, good Lord.”

S E R M O N III.

LUKE XXIV. 26.

*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things,
and to enter into his glory?*

THESE words are part of the discourse which our Lord had with two of his disciples, to whom he appeared after his resurrection, as they were walking into the country, and talking together of all those things which had happened to him. They were in the common belief of the Jews, that the Messiah when he came would either set up a temporal kingdom, and make them victorious over their enemies, or restore Paradise to the earth: his death therefore, tho' it was so plainly foretold by the prophets, and the salvation of mankind depended upon it, was not what they looked for; and it seems as if all their hopes of his working a great deliverance for them were buried with him in the grave. But when they had opened their griefs and fears to him, and told him what perplexity of mind they were un-

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der on occasion of his death, especially as there was a report stirring among them that he was risen again, and had been seen by certain women of their company ; *he said unto them, O fools* (not in scorn, it was a mild word from his mouth, that is, O inconsiderate men) *and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken ! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory ? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself, ver. 25, 26, 27.* But notwithstanding their misapprehension of the nature of his kingdom and office, let me tell you these were good hearts, and the men for Christ, though for the present they were overwhelmed with doubts and difficulties ; for when he had spoken these words, and seemed as if he was about to leave them, though they knew not who he was, they liked his discourse, and were very unwilling to part with him. They constrained him, were very urgent and importunate with him, to go into the house, and abide with them that night ; and when their eyes were opened to know him, upon his taking bread, blessing, breaking, and giving it to them, and he had vanished out of their sight, *they said one to another,*

ther, did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures? ver. 32. My brethren, we by the mercy of God have not only the very same Scriptures of the Old Testament still in our hands, but those of the New added to them, for our instruction, assurance, and comfort: and if you should say, we have not Christ to open them to us, as the two disciples had, let me desire you not to entertain any such mistake. For he hath promised to be *with us alway even unto the end of the world.* Matt. xxviii. 20. He is therefore always present and ready in the power of his Spirit to expound them to every willing soul, and it is our own fault if our hearts do not burn within us at the reading of them. Your diligent study of them will be attended with a blessing, they will be opened to your prayers, you will be made to rejoice in them, and praise God for them. I will be bold to say that Christ is among us this day, with the same love which brought him down from heaven to die for us, to seal the words of the text in all their saving import to every man and woman that is here ready to receive them. Lord Jesus, take the veil from every heart; that we may say from our own experience,

with full belief, and many thanksgivings to God for the unspeakable mercy of thy birth, death, and resurrection—*ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory.*

The words, you see, consist of two parts, the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and the opening of them will afford suitable matter for our meditations on this day and Easter-Sunday.

I. The first is the sufferings of Christ, and the necessity of them, strongly expressed in the question, *ought not Christ to have suffered?* He ought, he did—to fulfil the prophecies concerning him—to redeem us from the death of our souls and bodies—to leave us an example of patience, meekness, humility, and all other divine graces and holy tempers, to turn us from sin to God, from earth to heaven, and fix us in a state of pure obedience from a root of love.

1. That Christ should suffer, was according to prophecy. It was written of him in the first book of Moses, Gen. iii. 15, that tho' he should *bruise the serpent's head*, or destroy the devil's power, which he is always doing, and will do more signally before the end of the world, yet the serpent should
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bruise his heel, which was chiefly verified by his death. In the same book it is recorded that his death was revealed to Abraham, who saw it in the command to offer up his son Isaac, the child of promise, and which therefore is appointed to be read for the first morning lesson of this day: and the sacrifices in the law of Moses were so many figures, or standing prophecies of the lamb of God, the one great sacrifice for the sin of the world. The Psalms of David, and those in particular for this day's service, are full in the point. The Prophet Daniel says expressly, that *Messiah the Prince should be cut off*; ix. 26. and the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the first evening lesson, is as plain a description of Christ's sufferings, as if he had been present at the time, and seen them with his eyes. It was therefore necessary, in order to fulfil the truth of God declared in the prophecies, of which those I have mentioned are but a very small portion, that Christ should suffer. And as it was also necessary in itself, for reasons to be presently insisted on, so the many prophecies of it having been delivered many ages before, the first of them from the beginning of the world, and continued to the Prophet Malachi, about four hundred years before his

coming, are not only a full confirmation of the truth of all Scripture, but of great use to reconcile mankind to the belief of a dying Saviour. The thing is strange in itself to the apprehensions of mankind; and the enemies of our faith are always ready with this objection, put into their mouths by the Jews, how can he save others, who could not save himself from the ignominious death of the cross? But you will observe that the prophecies going before of this matter are a most surprising evidence in the case; and accordingly when our Lord opened the understanding of his disciples to understand the Scriptures, he said unto them, *thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer.* ver. 45, 46. And the apostles themselves likewise knew very well what advantage to make of this convincing argument in their reasonings with the unbelieving Jews, *opening and alledging*, from their own Scriptures, *that Christ must needs have suffered.* Acts xvii. 3. It was necessary in itself, and therefore to meet with the cavils, and stop the mouths of unbelievers, it was foretold in a great variety of Scriptures, and as it was foretold by God himself, must be fulfilled.

2. And I am now to shew why it was necessary in itself, and in the eternal purpose
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and decree of God, that Christ should suffer, namely, because there was no other way or means for the redemption of lost mankind.

One of the first things we meet with in the Bible, is the Fall of man from that happy state of innocence and perfection in which he was created, when *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.* Gen. i. 31. By breaking the law which had been given him by his Maker, he fell under the curse and penalty of disobedience. The word was gone out from the mouth of God, and must of all necessity take place in case of transgression? for the purpose of God is unchangeable; and *he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.* 1 Sam. xv. 29. He therefore died the worst of all deaths in the very day of his sin; he lost the life and image of God in his soul, forfeited all right to his favour, and became a suffering creature in a world cursed for his sake, with the sentence of death in his body, *dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.* Gen. iii. 19. So *sin entered into the world, and death by sin.* Rom. v. 12. death spiritual, temporal and eternal; and every child of Adam is born in his sinful likeness, of the same kind and nature with the stock it springs from, corrupt and weak

as he was after his transgression, and comes into the world under the same sentence of death. This is the Scripture account of our condition under the Fall. As to the death of our bodies, we need no proof of it, and are convinced by woeful experience that it is the doom of all mankind. But the death of our souls in the loss of God's image, manifested in the alienation of our hearts from him, the stubborn spirit of disobedience and rebellion which cleaves to our natures, the darkness of our understandings, the corruption of our wills, the prevailing sensuality and earthliness of our affections, we are willingly ignorant of; tho' such a state, which in Scripture account is the death of the soul, is much more to be dreaded than the death of our bodies, and if we are not recovered from it in the time allotted us for working out our salvation, will give us up to *the second death in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*, Rev. xxi. 8. *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; as our Lord himself tells us three times over, that we may take the more notice of it. Mark ix.

The Scripture is the only book which acquaints us with our danger and misery in sin, the manner of it's entrance into the world,

world, the curse which followed upon it, God's hatred of it, and terrible justice in it's punishment. And I beseech you not to pass this part of it lightly over in your minds, for it is a most concerning point of knowledge, and if we will make the proper use of it, gives us a clear insight into the nature of God, the nature of sin, and our condition under it; and from hence likewise it is that we must be furnished with an answer to the question in the text, *ought not Christ to have suffered?* Man was lost, and could not help and redeem himself. He must have lain forever under the curse and punishment of sin, if Christ had not taken it upon himself, and delivered him from all the fatal consequences of it, by offering his own spotless soul and body to the stroke of divine justice in our stead. This he did, by the appointment of God, and his own voluntary oblation of himself; for a world perishing in sin was a melancholy spectacle in the eyes of God, and his bowels were moved for us. So Christ satisfied all the demands of law and justice, and undid all the unhappy effects of sin; so he fulfilled the promise made to Adam, of bruising the serpent's head; so he released him and his posterity from the condemnation they were under,

under, and *through death destroyed him that had the power of death, the devil*, who had subjected mankind to it. Heb. ii. 14. His sufferings were ours, his death was our death, his life our life, his resurrection our resurrection. He took our nature upon him that he might sanctify and redeem it to God; and when he gave up his breath in these words, *it is finished*, he proclaimed aloud from his cross to all the world that sin was abolished, and the curse of it removed from our nature, death conquered, and the gates of heaven again set open for all that would come unto God by him. Now, I say with this knowledge in your hands, that we all fell and died in Adam, had lost our Paradise, lost our souls, lost our God, and could not restore and save ourselves, you can answer the question, *ought not Christ to have suffered?* For by *his stripes we are healed*, God laid on him the iniquities of us all, and by his death we live. When neither man nor angel could say, *lo, I come to do thy will, O God*; he took a body of our flesh, that by his perfect obedience unto death in our nature, and for our sakes, we might be discharged from the curse and punishment of our sin; and by his one offering of himself, according to the will of God,

God, *he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*, that is, who come in faith to the fountain opened in his sacred body for sin and uncleanness. So St. Paul argues for the necessity and universal benefit of Christ's sufferings, Rom. v. *that as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, so there was no other way or means of our being released from sin and death, or attaining to righteousness and life, but by one man Jesus Christ; *who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*; Rom. iv. 25. and *made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21.

But the Apostle in the same chapter, Rom. v, where he is opening this matter to the root, goes a step farther, and proves the necessity of Christ's suffering from another ground. As all mankind were to be born in the condition of their first Parents, and became subject to death by their sin, so the goodness of God had provided a remedy for them before the world began, and laid the foundation of their hope and trust in him, by the promise of a Redeemer from the moment of their Fall; that as *all were concluded under sin, he might have mercy upon all*, take occasion from thence to exalt the
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riches of his grace, and be known to them as the God of love. But observe, never so as to deny himself, never in opposition to his justice, never to dispense with his law, never so as to give mankind reason to believe there is any change made in his nature and will, or that he has less abhorrence of sin at one time than another. Suppose therefore that we are released from the guilt and punishment of Adam's sin by the suffering of Christ, yet if God is still the same, and sin the same in all persons in every age of the world, and death the wages of it at all times, where shall we find relief from the countless sum of our own transgressions? If that saying is always in force, *cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. our souls are forfeited a thousand times over, we pull death upon our heads every day by our own sins, and if the death of Christ does not extend to them we are still under a sentence of condemnation. Blessed be God, it does; and you shall hear how sweetly St. Paul presents this comfort to our belief and acceptance. *But not as the offence, so also is the freegift*, of forgiveness and righteousness by Jesus Christ, that is, exactly commensurate

menfurate to that one offence of Adam in all points, and no more : *for if through the offence of one many be dead ; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, hath abounded unto many.* And how does he explain himself upon this head ? Why that we might have no doubt of the great extent and super-abundance of the grace of God by Christ, he tells us as plainly as words can do, that it is an absolute discharge, and full redemption not only from the guilt of original or birth sin, but from our own numberless offences against God. And I beseech you to observe carefully that the apostle's reasoning on the point is clear to this purpose : that as the suffering of Christ was necessary to set us clear of the first man's sin, and release us from the sentence of death which he had brought upon himself and all his posterity, so it was equally necessary to deliver us from the curse of our own ; every sin of every single man being always sin in the sight of God, and as such exposing us to a sentence of condemnation. So that we must all say over again, upon our own account, and for a reason which deeply concerns us all, *ought not Christ to have suffered ?* When he spoke these words to the two disciples,

disciples, he knew very well what he said. He had a piercing view, and full comprehension of the desperate malignity, odious nature and infinite evil of sin, of the death to which it subjects us, and of God's eternal, unchangeable justice, though we have not. For though we cannot help knowing and owning it in some measure, if we believe the Scripture, yet our apprehensions of the guilt and desert of sin are always weak, and far short of the truth. When God lays the burden of it upon a soul, as he does upon some in sore convictions, it is found to be heavy indeed, and forces the man to cry out, woe is me, for I am undone; but still it is not understood in it's whole length and breadth; the depth of God's justice, the height of his mercy, the curse of sin, and our obligations to the Saviour for delivering us from it, will never be fully known till we come into another world. Let us endeavour as we are able to grasp the unfathomable mystery by looking on the cross, and that we may better take the dimensions of our sin, dwell more especially on the word CHRIST. Who *bore our sins in his own body on the tree?* Who paid the price of our redemption with his blood? Whose soul was it that was *exceeding sorrowful even unto death,*

death, who is it whom we behold ready to sink under a world's guilt in his bitter agony in the garden, whose voice is that which we hear from the cross, crying out under a sense of God's wrath, *my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Not the voice of a man like ourselves; neither was it an angel of the highest order that groaned, and bled, and died for us, in such intolerable torments and anguish of soul as nothing but our sins then laid upon him could 'cause, and which I pray God we may never feel in our own persons. It was Christ himself, the Son of the living God, who laid from eternity in the bosom of the Father, equal with him in glory and majesty; he it was who thus suffered. And oh! the horrible and extreme curse of sin! he *ought* to have suffered; for no other ransom could be found for us in heaven or earth, none but he could purge our defilement, and snatch us from the brink of hell, nothing but the infinite value and merit of his bloody death could save us from the eternal death of our souls and bodies. O God! let us tremble at thy justice, let us fear thy wrath, let us fall down before thee in most profound adoration for this excess of thy love. Let every one say, O Adam, what

what hast thou done ! thus to expose the only innocent person of all thy race to such unknown pains and sufferings. But let us not stop there ; let every man look into, and smite upon his own breast ; let every soul say for itself, with one eye upon the cross, and another upon it's own guilt, what hast *thou* done to nail that sacred body to the cursed tree, to afflict that righteous man, to bring him there to be made a sacrifice of atonement for thee, and to wash out the foul stains of thy heart and life with his blood ! Whatever thou art in comparison with other men, and though never so high in the esteem of the world for prudence, good nature, beneficence and regularity of behaviour, whatever is the form of thy life, or the thought of thy heart, the glorious God-man must have suffered for thee, if there never had been another sinner upon earth ; and if this is not thy knowledge of Christ, thy faith, thy great hope, and the anchor of thy soul, thou art ignorant of God, of sin, of thyself, and not yet a Christian either in belief or practice. For it signifies nothing what else we learn from the Bible, if we are not grounded in this fundamental article of it, that *Christ died for the ungodly, the just for the unjust*, and that we ourselves

are of that number; and our obedience never is holy and christian, till we have seen the shortness of it in his death, measure ourselves by his rule, make all we do an offering of love to him, and are going on to perfection under the guidance of his Spirit. If therefore you would have any benefit from him, who says, *look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth*, Is. xlv. 22. if you would rejoice in the mercy of this day, if you would look on him as pierced *for* you, look on him first as pierced *by* you. He is the Physician of value for those who are sick, and know their want of him; but in vain do you pretend to believe in him, or apply to him for healing, so long as you think you are whole, more or less, and do not see that sin in yourselves from which he is to save you. As I said before, not the whole of it, for it is an unknown depth, and the sight of all our sin, in all it's guilt, would be more than we could bear. But we may, and must understand so much of it as is sufficient to humble our proud hearts in the dust; this very persuasion we may have concerning it, that when we have done all we can to attain to a perfect knowledge of it, and aggravated it to the utmost, it is still far greater than any thing we feel, or

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can imagine. *Ought not Christ to have suffered?* Ponder the words, let your faith answer that question, and the sin which now seems little in your eyes will swell to a mountain. If we had been left to estimate our sin, and fix the price of it's redemption, we should never have set it at so high a rate as the blood of Christ; but if we believe that price has been paid for it, we must on that very consideration necessarily conclude it to be great beyond all conception. I do not say this to daunt and terrify you, or lead you to despair, but to prevent it, by pointing out your remedy, and the precious means of deliverance from sin, and death the consequence of it. For if the necessity of Christ's suffering affords us a view of our astonishing guilt on the one hand, the name, Jesus, is as great on the other for our comfort, and full relief against all the accusations of conscience, and all our fears of condemnation. If the sin of man is great, surely the blood of God shed for that purpose can purge it. Even thine, O sinner, whoever thou art, and how great soever thy sin has been; for if it pleases God, I would speak glad tidings to thee. Though thou hast wandered never so long from thy heavenly Father, thou hast a thousand calls

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from him, and a thousand promises to assure thee of a welcome reception upon thy return to him, and every one of them sealed in the blood of Christ. Oh! let them sound deep into thy soul, let thy heart be moved within thee to get an interest in them, give up thy sins for them, run into the arms of thy Saviour. See them as on this day stretched out wide upon the cross to embrace a world; hear thy salvation pronounced by him in the last words he ever spoke, *it is finished*. Only do not delude thyself with the vain hope of being accepted to it in a hardened impenitent state; do not so dishonour the holy Jesus, as to make him a minister of thy sin. He died for thee because it has slain thee, and would have brought thee to the place of everlasting torment; but if thou dost not see the reason and necessity of dying to it in his death for it, thou art one of those who crucify him afresh, thou tramplest the blood of the Son of God under thy feet, and if death finds thee in this state, mercy is at an end with thee for ever.

But methinks I hear some complaining that they do not mourn enough for sin, and that the sense of it does not lie so heavy upon them as they think it ought to do.

Probably they do not; but nevertheless to them I say, refuse not your comfort upon any such pretence. Christ is for you whenever your eyes are opened to see your sin, and will in nowise reject you when you look to him for salvation from it. I do not advise such to grieve no more for sin; for it is always a grief of heart to every sincere Christian, and none mourn so kindly over it as those who believe it is forgiven; but then I am sure they wrong their souls every way, go without their best comfort, and hinder their progress, by poring over it all their days without looking to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. *He ought to have suffered*; he did suffer; and why not for you, when you know your want of him, and are troubled in seeking him? Call to mind those words, Rom. viii. 31—35. *What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? It is God that justifieth, by the death of Christ, who is he that condemneth?* I say, let these and many other such words lie as a cordial at your heart, and never be so foolish as to condemn yourself, when the will of God is declared to you in such strong terms for your eternal justification, and

and you have such a precious antidote against all your fears in Christ crucified.

Finally, my brethren, *the Lord Jesus Christ is our hope*; 1 Tim. i. 1. the only hope of all saints and sinners, and blessed be God for it. If we had known by nature as well as we do by the death of Christ, what an evil case we are in by sin, both as children of a condemned father, and actual transgressors ourselves, how could we ever assure ourselves of forgiveness? And if either through unbelief, or continuance in sin, we go without the remedy which has been brought to us from heaven, where shall we look for another? If God had not provided himself a lamb for a burnt offering, where should we have found one? And if Christ had not been that lamb, not one sin could have been taken away. I say, what else have you to trust to, and what is it that you would put in the place of Christ, and his cross? Your duties, your good meanings, your sobriety, and fair character? Alas! in the generality they are far to seek; but if they were as real as they are pretended, great is your blindness, great is your presumption, and great will be your condemnation, if you have nothing better to ground yourselves upon for life. You have sin cleaving

to all you do ; and what then are you doing in the great concern of dealing with God about the acceptance of your souls, but coming to him with a lie in your right hand, and covering your sins by more sin ? Know your nakedness, know your shame, know your guilt, and confess it humbly to God, that you may be received to the grace of forgiveness. Christ will cover all your sins ; but if you do not come to him for washing in his blood, and receive him by faith as your atonement and peace-maker with God, they are all upon record, and standing out against you to this hour. He can save you as sinners, and when you are laid low enough in your own eyes to be saved by him, but has nothing to do with those who exalt their own works against him, and look for strength, righteousness, and salvation in themselves. They are blind in the very point which makes a Christian, and distinguisheth him from all other men, namely, *redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*. Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. For there never was a true Christian in the world who did not find rest for his soul in this belief, and make it the ground of his hope towards God. To confirm us in this faith more and more, and that we might hold fast this
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bleſſed hope, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was appointed, in which Chriſt is evidently ſet before our eyes, crucified. His body broken, and blood poured out for us, are therein repreſented to our ſenſes, and all the benefits of his paſſion ſealed and conveyed to us. What thoſe mean by calling themſelves Chriſtians, who coldly turn their backs upon it, what knowledge they can have of Chriſt, or themſelves, what faith in him, what deſire to be partakers of him, they would do well to conſider; I fear the caſe is too plain, and pray God to make it as plain to their own hearts and underſtandings, that Chriſt is nothing to them.

Befides the two reaſons already opened for the neceſſity of Chriſt's ſuffering, namely, to fulfil the prophecies concerning him, and to redeem us from the death of our ſouls and bodies, I mentioned another, which was, to leave us an example of patience, meekneſs, and humility, to fill our ſouls with devout admiration of his graces and holy tempers, to turn us from all ſin, and confirm us in all duty: but this will be more properly ſpoken to under the ſecond particular in the text, namely, the glory that ſhould follow upon his ſuffering.

The Lord make our hearts burn within us to hear of it! May the prayer of Jesus to the Father be effectual on our behalf, that we also may be given to him, and being washed in his blood, and prepared by faith and love, *may be with him where he is, to behold his glory!* John xvii. 24.

II. We are to consider our Lord's entrance into glory, what it is, how we are concerned in it, and what use it will be of to us to take the best view of it we are able.

He was glorious in his birth, and all the acts and passages of his life, glorious in his miracles, glorious in living for no other end than to do good, glorious in the perfection of his obedience, and *though he was crucified through weakness*, 2 Cor. xiii. 4. submitted to it as one of the weakest and vilest of men, yet in the sight of God and his holy angels he was exceeding glorious in his death. But still there was a glory to follow upon his sufferings, as the reward of them, of a different kind from all that went before, and in which, if I may so speak, he was to appear like himself—the glory of his resurrection and ascension, mission of the Holy Ghost, and sitting at the right hand of God in that fulness of power with which he is
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invested for the carrying on all the ends of his incarnation and death, and in order to his bringing many sons unto glory; together with that last, awful act of his office, when he shall sit upon the throne of his glory to judge the quick and dead. He manifested his glory when he was upon earth; *and we beheld it*, says St. John, *as the glory of the only begotten of the Father.* i. 14. To those who did not see it in the days of his flesh, a whole assembled world, he will manifest himself in all the glory and majesty of his grace and power, either to save, or sentence them to depart from him for ever.

To this end, *that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*, Rom. xiv. 9. he rose again. His resurrection therefore was the first act or manifestation of that glory which was to follow upon his sufferings. To this he referred the unbelieving Jews more than once, as a most convincing proof of his being the Christ; *destroy this temple*, pointing to his body, the living temple of God, *and in three days I will raise it up.* John ii. 19. Matt. xii. 39, 40. And with this assurance he constantly supported and comforted his disciples; and whenever he acquainted them with the necessity of his death, to their exceeding great amazement, he revived
their

their hopes with this declaration, *the third day I will rise again.* The necessity of his resurrection is apparent; the glory of it was great, and a strange thing in the earth. If he had not risen again, the Jews would have triumphed in their rejection of him, and the world would have joined with them in concluding that he was a deceiver. That he did rise again, as he had foretold, and was thereby *declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness,* Rom. i. 4. is such a firm foundation of our faith in him as cannot be shaken. And as the whole weight of our faith was in a manner to be laid upon that single point, and the testimony which the apostles gave to it, so they were furnished with all the necessary proofs of it, he being seen of them, eating, drinking, and conversing with them, forty days after his resurrection, with the same body which was crucified, and with the marks of his crucifixion upon it, and in their sight ascending with it into heaven. Blessed be God, in our nature, and with our nature in himself. He rose again in it, and carried it with him into heaven; and by so doing, conquered death, not for himself, but in our stead, and is gone before to prepare a place for us in his Father's house,

house, where believers are now in his right, in virtue of their resurrection and ascension with him as members of his body, and must infallibly be received to him, to be where he is in their own persons, if they cleave to him as their head, and *hold fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end.* Heb. iii. 14. *If ye then be risen with Christ,* says St. Paul, Col. iii. 1 : speaking of it as a matter undoubted and evident from the whole nature and design of Christ's undertaking for us, that his members are so risen ; for he did not die, nor rise again, nor ascend into heaven for himself. And to the same purpose he says expressly, that *God hath raised us,* all true Christians and believers, *up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.* Eph. ii. 6. But though Christ was quickened by the Spirit, and raised in glory, and ascended into heaven, as it was necessary he should, to prove himself to be the Christ, to enter into heaven for us as our forerunner, and take possession of it in our names ; yet both these are not the completion of his glory, but parts of it, and chiefly preparatory to that higher degree of glory to which he was to be received, and is now possessed of at the right hand of God.

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It is the surpassing glory of Christ, that as man, and for the sake of what he did and suffered for man, he is exalted in dignity and pre-eminence above the whole creation of God, *has all power given him in heaven and earth*, and is appointed *the head over all things to the church, which is his body, angels and authorities and powers being made subject to him*, acting under his command, and sent forth by him to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation. Matt. xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 22, 23. 1 Pet. iii. 22. I say, you are to observe carefully that these things are spoken of him as man; for as God much more than all this was his right from all eternity; and St. Paul is very clear in the reason of his exaltation, it was because *he took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross: wherefore*, says he, *God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* Phil. ii. 6—10. As he took our nature upon him, and with it our sin, that in it he might make satisfaction to the divine justice, and executed the Father's will

will by laying down his life for the redemption of lost mankind; so the reward is conferred upon him in that very nature, and he is now set down in it at the right hand of God, with authority in his own hands to carry all his gracious designs for our good into effect, and dispense all the purchases of his life and death: of which the first was sending the Holy Ghost.

He did this remarkably at the day of Pentecost; he is always doing it, though more secretly, and must do it in every soul that is saved, according to his own peremptory assertion, twice repeated to Nicodemus, *except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* John iii. 3. 5. We are commanded to *repent, and believe the Gospel*, and told that *by grace we are saved, through faith*, and that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Mark i. 15. Eph. ii. 8. Heb. xii. 14. And the design of these declarations is to convince us that so it must be, and to shew us wherein our salvation consists. But then lest we should mistake him, and look only to ourselves for power and ability to attain to repentance, faith and holiness, we are told as expressly that *Christ is exalted to the right hand of God to be a Prince and*

a Saviour, to give repentance, and forgiveness of sins ; that faith is the gift of God ; and that it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do, namely, by his Spirit, whose office it is under Christ to reprove, or convince, the world of sin, to shew us the righteousness of Christ, by the faith whereof we are saved, and to judge the prince of this world, by casting those lusts out of our hearts, which are the devil's power over us, and strength in us. Acts v. 31. Eph. ii. 8. John xvi. 8—11. And that we have such an almighty helper, to work in us repentance and faith, to guide us into all truth, and confirm us in the love and practice of it, to receive of the things of Christ, to shew and to testify them to us, is a most excellent part of the glory to which he was advanced after his resurrection and ascension, the peculiar privilege and great blessing of the Gospel times, purchased for us by his merits and sufferings. By him he communicates himself, the healing virtue of his blood, the quickening power of his grace, to the Church, and to the souls of believers ; by him he lives and reigns in us ; by him he gives us power to become the sons of God, and sends him as the Spirit of adoption into our hearts ; he it is
who

who enlightens our understandings, renews our wills and affections, sanctifieth our spirits, souls, and bodies, supports us in all our difficulties and distresses, excites us to prayer, helps our infirmities in it, and seals us unto the day of redemption, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come in his glory to judge the quick and dead, to receive his faithful servants to himself, and doom the wicked to their own place; and then, after this concluding act of his glory, as man, *deliver up his mediatorial kingdom to God, even the Father, that God, in Trinity, may be all in all; 1 Cor. xv. 24.* the distinct offices of Father, Son, and Spirit, having had their effect, and then ceasing for ever. In the mean time the kingdom is in his hands; *for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell, that he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are in earth, even in him: he being appointed the head of rule to angels and men, that under him they might be one family, and one body, knit together in one communion and fellowship of love, adoration, and holy offices, and all praising God through him, and for him, in time and eternity. 1 Cor.*

xv. 25. Col. i. 19. Eph. i. 10. Rev. v.
11—14.

Surely, my brethren, these things greatly concern us; for the glory of Christ is the salvation of man. All he did and suffered for our sakes, was for the glory of his grace and love; the glory which followed upon his sufferings was given him as the reward of his undertaking and accomplishing the work of our redemption from sin and death, and it is the glory of his power to be employed for this end. He is continually interceding for us at the throne of grace, and with the same bowels of compassion which brought him into the world to die for us, presenting his blood before the mercy-seat in heaven for our pardon and acceptance with God; he sends the Holy Spirit to quicken our dead souls, to unite us to him by faith, and set him upon his throne in our hearts; he has given us his rule to be our guide, and conducts us to happiness in the highway of holiness; he sends forth his ministering spirits to guard and protect us in all our dangers; he has his eye always upon us for good in all the passages of our lives; and *the hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good*
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unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

John v. 28, 29. What a call is there in all this to the poor soul, lying in darkness and the shadow of death, with heaven opened to it on one hand and hell on the other, to know and consider, to understand and receive the mercy of the Gospel, to lift up it's eye to the glorious hope which is set before it, to run into the arms of the Saviour, to fulfil the joy of his heart, and answer the ends of his glory, by putting itself into his hands for happiness and salvation! It is a most astonishing view of the danger of our condition, of God's knowledge of it, and infinite, tender concern for us in it, which is given us in that passage of St. John, where it is said, *therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life.* v. 17. Because, in obedience to the Father, and moved by his own free love, he would bear our sin and punishment in his own body, ransom us from death with his life, rescue and save us at any rate from the misery we were fallen into, therefore (mark it well) *the Father loved him*, and put him in possession of that glory, which I have briefly represented, but which all our thoughts cannot reach in this state of imperfection. What

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cause have we to say with the same St. John, *we love him, because he first loved us?* 1 Ep. iv. 19. How can we help every one of us calling out to Jesus, *Lord remember me in thy kingdom?* Give me such a sense of thy almighty love, such a sight of thy excellent glory, to which thou art exalted in and for our nature, that my heart may burn within me night and day to be partaker of it; that thou mayest be glorified in me, and that my soul may bless thee for the great things thou hast done for me, a poor worm, sinful dust and ashes. God forbid that we should lose our portion in him, forfeit our inheritance, and sell our birth-right for a lust, for the world, or any thing it can give us. *Beloved*, says St. John, *now are we the sons of God*, that is, by faith and love which is in Christ Jesus, if we are so at all; *and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.* 1 John iii. 2. Let us raise our thoughts and wishes to this blessed hope, for the Apostle gives us to understand that it is glorious beyond all that we can conceive; let us summon all our powers to secure it; let us resolutely put ourselves in the way to it, by *purifying ourselves even as he*

he is pure; ver. 3. let us keep our eyes steadily fixed on the glory of Christ in every part of it, that we may make our advantage of it for attaining to that sight, and by it to a likeness with him, and meetness for the everlasting enjoyment of him, and of God through him. If he is risen, it is that we may rise with him, and as persons dead to our old state, in sin, or worldliness and unconcern for the soul, from henceforth live unto him that died for us, according to his rule, after his example, by his Spirit, to the glory of God. This he accounts the glory of his resurrection; and thus we shall know the power of it, in newness of life here, in the full virtue and benefit of it hereafter; when *he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, and change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* 2 Cor. v. 15. 2 Thess. i. 10. Phil. iii. 21. If he ascended into heaven, we also must in heart and mind thither ascend, dwell with him in our affections, gladly receive of those gifts which in his royal state he is intrusted to bestow, and make it the great business of our lives to prepare to follow him, that we

may be where he is, to behold the king in his beauty. If it is his glory to send the Holy Ghost, to open our hearts to receive him in all his offices, and make his life and death effectual to our salvation; what can we think of this but that the Spirit of faith and holiness is one of his best and most necessary gifts, and that from hence alone we derive all our strength, sufficiency, and comfort? If he has all power given him for our benefit, how can we answer the end of that donation, or promote his glory, but by being made partakers of it, and receiving power from him to become the sons of God? If he is the head over all things, it is that we may be gathered to him as members of his body into that one society which is blessed through him, be supplied continually out of his fulness, and live by his life. If the Lord Jesus will come in the glory of his Father, and in his own glory, and of the holy angels, to raise us from our graves, and call us before his judgment-seat; oh! what should be the use and improvement of this, but to set us all on fire to meet him with joy at that awful time, and have our place at his right hand for ever! And if we are not thus prepared for his second coming, his sufferings, and every
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part of his glory, will then turn to our everlasting confusion. His sufferings on our behalf will be the seal of our condemnation ; his resurrection, and ascension, that we might rise with him, and ascend to him ; his sitting at the right hand of God, to govern, protect, and bless us ; his Spirit offered in vain ; his grace abused, his benefits despised, his love repaid with unkindness : all will sit heavy upon our souls, upbraid us for our folly with terrible aggravation, and be the never-dying worm at our hearts. To prevent your falling into this misery, if it pleases God, let me now speak a word to you of what I mentioned as a third reason of his suffering, and what it belongs to his glory to bring us to ; namely, that he suffered to leave us an example of patience, meekness and humility, to fill our souls with devout admiration of his graces and holy tempers, to turn us from all sin, and fix us in a state of pure obedience from a root of love.

He was Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature, to shew us by a living example what we ought to be, and what we shall be, when God is in us ; meek and patient, humble and contented, dead to the world, ready to suffer for the will of God, and set-

ting him before us as our pattern in all things, that we may copy after his holiness, and be changed into the same image. *If any man serve me*, says he, *let him follow me*; John xii. 26. that is, in the way he has marked out for all, by living up to his rule, and treading in his steps. And the meaning is evident, that if we do not thus follow him, we cannot be his disciples; in vain do we expect to be owned by him, or honoured by his Father. *Where I am*, says he again, *there shall also my servant be*. Blessed call and encouragement to well-doing! he means in heaven; but observe, he says *my servant*; plainly giving us to understand, that if we are not first with him in service here, receiving his commands, doing as he did, living as he lived, endeavouring and praying to be established in his graces and holy tempers, we cannot be with him in glory hereafter. It is his glory to make us meet for heaven, by renewing us to his likeness; and *for this purpose was he manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*; 1 John iii. 8. by turning us from all sin, and creating us to the desire and love of holiness; but if we do not look for it at his hands, and receive him as our Saviour in this respect also, we utterly mistake one great

great end of his coming. If there is any thing plain in Scripture, it is, that if we will not be his children by similitude of nature, study his example, and imitate him in his life, we can have no benefit of his death. *Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus*, says St. Paul, speaking of his great humility and self-abasement, and to provoke us by such an unparalleled instance of it to be lowly in our own eyes, to bear with the infirmities of others, to look with tenderness and pity on their faults, to fear for ourselves, and endeavour to restore them in the spirit of meekness. Phil. ii. 1—5. Gal. vi. 1—4. And on the same consideration St. Peter exhorteth to patient continuance in well-doing, whatever we suffer for it; telling us, that *even hereunto are we called, because*, says he, *Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.* 1 Ep. ii. 18—23. This therefore was one end of his sufferings, that we might learn of him; and he then sees of the travel of his soul in us, and is satisfied, when we walk with God as he also

walked, and as true members of his body conform to our Head in all things. He calls us to it, and strictly requires it of us; and his love, if we are grounded in it, will constrain us to it. What has he not done for us, and what cause have we to cry out with admiration and great astonishment, *behold, how he loved-us?* The glory he was possessed of at the right hand of the Father relinquished, to come into a world of sin and misery—his body nailed to the cross—his blood poured out like water—his hands and feet, heart and head, all pierced—his soul oppressed with the weight of God's vengeance, and almost sinking under the pains we should have endured—death overcome, heaven opened, his power employed, his Spirit given to bring us to it—what shall we say to all this? What can move us, what can melt down our stubborn hearts, and draw some suitable returns of love from them, if this does not? We know that what he desires, and all he desires of us, in return for his love, and as the proof and fruit of our faith, is to keep his commandments; that is, to be as happy here as we can be, and to come to his glory in the same way of holiness he went before us. And we are assured that *if we have been planted together*
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in the likeness of his death, believing that in and with him we paid the debt of sin, and died to the condemnation of it, and on that ground dying to sin, and living unto God in the truth of a pure obedience, *we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*; have our mortal bodies quickened by the same Spirit which raised up him from the dead, to sit down with him in his kingdom, and enjoy all the fruits of his life, death, and resurrection, at God's right hand for evermore.

O Jesus, have mercy on us, and grant us thy peace. Let us have no rest till we are seeking after it, till we are established in it. Take possession of our souls and bodies, raise up thy own life and likeness in us; that in the faith of thy love, and the power of the eternal Spirit, we may do all such good works as thou hast appointed for us to walk in, lie down in our graves with the seal of God in our foreheads, and rise again to meet thee with joy at thy second coming, to the everlasting praise of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

S E R M O N I V.

ACTS XI. 13, 14.

Send to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.

WHAT those words are whereby Cornelius and his house were to be saved, and by which every man and woman to the end of the world must be saved, you will hear by and by. But I must first open the occasion of them, and give you some account of the method by which he was brought to the knowledge of Christ.

Let me say to you, my brethren, in the awakening call of our blessed Saviour, *if any man hath ears to hear, let him hear.* Words whereby we and our houses must be saved! Eternally saved! How important, how awful is this! How should every earthly concern shrink into nothing, how should every imagination of man's heart die away, at the thought of that eternal state of being, which

which every one here present must enter upon within a few years, and some perhaps in a few weeks! What care should we take to be upon a right foundation here! And how should it put all the powers of our souls in motion to secure that grand point, an interest in the Saviour, and a well-grounded hope of being for ever happy with God! It is true, great is our blindness, great is our sin, great is our unworthiness. But nevertheless the God who made us for himself has rich mercy in store for us; and nothing shall by any means hurt us, if we turn to him in repentance, embrace the knowledge he offers us, and accept his covenant of peace. He will still be our God *to bless us in turning away every one of us from our iniquities.* Acts iii. 26. As upon this day he sent down the Holy Ghost, to take possession of our natures, to quicken our dead souls, to alter the vicious bent of our affections, to conquer the stubborn opposition of our wills, and to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ, with all his benefits, to the hearts of all faithful people. And as sure as he fell on Cornelius, and those with him who heard the word, so surely will he be an almighty helper, and abiding comforter, to every man of every nation under
heaven,

heaven, who chuses his comforts, and puts himself into his hands for faith in Christ, newness of life, and strength to do the will of God; so surely will he open the eyes of all who desire it, *turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may obtain remission of sins, and inheritance among them, that are sanctified by faith that is in Christ Jesus.* Acts xxvi. 18.

To give us all possible assurance of this, that God has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, and granted them repentance unto life; to set before us the necessity of being grafted into Christ for the remission of sins, and that he may dwell in us by his Spirit, and make us living temples of the living God—is the design of this instructive passage of Scripture which I am now going to open to you. The Lord open it to your hearts this day by the working of his mighty power, and make it effectual to your calling and salvation!

Cornelius, a Centurion, or Captain of a band of Soldiers under the Roman Governor, by living amongst the Jews had gained such a knowledge of their religion, and entertained such a liking to it, as to live according to the rules of it. Amongst them he had learned to worship the true God, to fast

and pray, and give much alms, and led a strict, devout life. But still, not being circumcised, he could not be reputed a Jew. And therefore the Apostles, who as yet did not know that the Gospel was to be preached to any but Jews, could not make an offer of it to Him, as he was not in all points converted to the Jewish religion; thinking it unlawful to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation. But God, whose mercy is over all his works, who had determined in his own good time to break down the middle wall of partition betwixt Jew and Gentile, and make of both one body under one head, Jesus Christ, thus makes way for his own purpose. In one vision he directs Cornelius to send for Peter, to tell him what he should do in order to his salvation. In another to Peter, in which he *saw heaven opened and a certain vessel descending to him as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: wherein were all manner of four footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air: And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill and eat, i. e. of all or any of the creatures which he saw, without distinction of clean or unclean*—God shewed him that he *should*

should not call any man common or unclean, or refuse to converse with him under that notion. And lest he should mistake God's meaning and design in the vision, while he was musing upon it, the Spirit said to him expressly, Behold three men seek thee; arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them.

When you read that Cornelius was the first man from among the Gentiles, who was brought to the faith of Christ, let it not pass without some reflection; let me instruct you a little what observations to make upon it. What God had so long foretold, and so often promised, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs with his people, children of the covenant, and partakers of the heavenly calling, was now in this instance solemnly and remarkably fulfilled. This was the very time and place of God's signing and sealing to all his promises in behalf of the Gentiles. Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, was now proclaimed to all, and Christ herein fully explained his commission to the apostles, to *go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.* Before this, mankind sat in

darkness and the shadow of death, were outcasts from mercy, without hope and without God in the world, i. e. as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but lived in ignorance and forgetfulness of him, without regard to his will, or seeking to him for a blessing upon their souls. But now the gates of Paradise were again set wide open, and abundant entrance was ministered to us into the love and favour of God, and a way made for the fulfilling of that saying, *Many shall come from the east and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.* So that this is a leading case, and Cornelius is in a sense the father of us all. Christ purchased eternal redemption for us, and our eyes and hearts must be to Him, as the blessed author of it; but we hold of Cornelius, as it were, for it's conveyance to us, and settlement upon us. In him the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles; in and through him the ever-blessed Spirit returned to take his abode with them, and by God's calling and acceptance of *Him*, we are infallibly assured that he now reputes no man of any nation common or unclean, i. e. so as to be incapable of his favour, and unfit for redeeming mercy; if he does
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not make himself so, by chusing the pollutions of his own heart and nature, and refusing to come to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. God be thanked for Cornelius, and for this declaration, and great example of his free general mercy to all mankind in him ! God be thanked for sending Peter to every one of us, when he sent him to Cornelius, with an offer of grace and salvation ! Blessed be God for this solemn opening of his covenant of peace to us, for sending down the Holy Ghost upon the Gentiles, and for recording this in sacred Scripture for our comfort and assurance.

But let us attend to another very important particular in this remarkable story of Cornelius. We are told, Acts x. 2, 22. that *he was a just, devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.* Now here you will be ready to ask, what could this man want more for his salvation ? If a course of justice, alms-giving, and strict devotion, if a proper regard to all the duties we owe to God and man, will not entitle us to heaven, what will ? Alas ! you may say, (and I wish you were so far awakened as to say it with true concern for yourselves) this is a great deal more than
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we do, or think necessary ; and if much less will not prevail for our acceptance, how shall we stand before God, and where almost is the man or woman amongst us, who can have so much as a faint hope of being saved ? We do not watch unto prayer, so as to be hard at work with God in it day by day for spiritual blessings. We do not devote a reasonable part of our substance to God in works of charity, as knowing that we receive it from him in trust, and are only stewards of what he gives for such uses as he appoints. We are not generally strict, moral men in our dealings, but lay fatal snares for the life of our souls, and fall in too much with the way of the world, in frauds, and tricks, and lying for gain. Alas ! we do not serve Almighty God in and with all our houses in any constant method of daily devotion ; and if it was not for Sunday's religion, which is set out to our hands, and as it were forced upon us, our families would hardly know by any thing we say or do at other times, whether we so much as believe there is a God, who is to be loved, served, and worshipped by us. I pray God send this rebuke to your hearts ; for we are a dead people ; and I fear it cannot be said of many of us that we outstrip the heathens in

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the practice of a hearty free devotion towards God, or our conscientious dealings with one another. And what then shall we do, when God entereth into judgment with us, for these things are on all hands allowed to be proper, if not necessary marks of true religion; and without them neither Cornelius, nor any other man upon earth could be accepted. But still you will say, why could he not be accepted with, and for them, for his justice, his alms, his prayers, or *without* any thing else; God be merciful to us, what could he want? I will tell you; he wanted what all want: he wanted Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; he wanted the healing virtue of his most precious blood, to wash out the foul stains both of original and actual pollution; he wanted the merits of his all-sufficient sacrifice, and perfect righteousness, and the application of them by faith to his own soul; he wanted the Holy Spirit to enable him for this believing application, and to make all his graces truly so; nay, he wanted repentance unto life, as saint-like and as good as he was; and if he had not prostrated himself at the foot of the cross with this confession in his mouth, breathed from the bottom of his heart, as all must who come
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to Christ for salvation—"God be merciful to me a sinner"—he could have had no benefit from him. Here therefore is a man for God's purpose, to give us the strongest information, and the clearest possible evidence in a necessary point of belief; here is one singled out to convince the world of sin, and shew men to their faces that *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*; here is one who could have stood upon his own bottom, if ever any man could, and yet we are plainly given to understand that if Christ had not been preached to him, and received by him, he could have had no title to eternal life. For though these words at first hearing may seem to sound otherwise—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." x. 34, 35.—As if honest, moral men, so called, in all parts of the world would be accepted without any more ado, and for the sake of their own righteousness; yet this portion of sacred Scripture is a direct confutation of that notion. For else, why should such a method have been taken with Cornelius, one of the best of men; what need was there of vision upon vision to bring him to the knowledge

and belief of Christ, if he could have been accepted without him? And what stronger proof can we have than this instance, that *there is salvation in no other,—no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?* Acts iv. 12. I say again, this one instance casts down all our towering thoughts of ourselves, and levels all, the best and the worst, in point of justification with God. And as other parts of sacred Scripture invite sinners, and give encouragement to the greatest of sinners to cast themselves upon Christ, so this was written to shew us, that out of Christ all are, and will be reputed of God as sinners, and that none must plead themselves, or their own works, how specious soever, as the ground of their salvation. No, my brethren; mercy we all want; and whoever they are who will not sue for it to the throne of grace, in a humbling sense of their vileness and misery, have a fiery trial to go through. Christ rejects none that come unto God by him; but one sin unpurged with his blood will quite dash all our plea of merit, and sink us to hell. If this sound harsh, and you will still think that some reckoning may well be made of what you call your good hearts, good meanings, and good actions, I must tell

tell you farther that you have not so much as one perfectly good action, free from all spot of sin, to shew for yourselves in your whole lives ; and then what will you do with all the rest ? And as for the good hearts we talk of, I am sure that is a naughty, proud heart, stark blind, and full of hypocrisy, guile and rebellion, which will not stoop to Christ, suffer all its imaginary perfection to be torn from it, and be a debtor to God for his mercy. Look to it, for evil is before you ; there is no trifling with this sacred, fundamental point of Christian belief, that it is Christ *who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption ;* 1 Cor. i. 30. *that by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.* Eph. ii. 8. Think with yourself, what are you beyond other men, and what have you done to enable you to lift up your face with confidence before God, defy his justice, and challenge his heaven as the due reward of your deeds ? You are no extortioner, unjust man, nor adulterer ; you have a fair character in the world, and do much to justify yourself before men. But you do not fast twice in the week, nor perhaps twice in a year upon a religious account ; you do not

give alms in proportion to your estate, you do not pray always, continually in the bent of your heart, daily in secret, and at the times and seasons of public prayer in your parish; you do not fear God with all your house, so as to set up his worship in it, and teach all that belong to you to fear him. But still if you fasted, and prayed, and gave much alms, as Cornelius did; if you could say with St. Paul, that you know nothing by yourselves, and as touching the righteousness which is of the law are blameless; if, like Job, you were perfect and upright, fearing God, and eschewing evil; yet if the foundation of all you do is not laid firm and sure in the blood of Christ, and faith in him by the Holy Ghost, you build with untempered mortar; all this goodly fabric of your own raising must be thrown down, and not one stone left upon another. Still this is man's righteousness and not God's; it may do well enough for this world, and promote the satisfaction of your lives in some degree, and procure you the esteem of men, but it is not, cannot be the ground of eternal life, and if you make it the ground of your trust will ruin you for ever. Still you are but just where Paul was when God struck him to the earth with a light from heaven; still

still you are not come to Job's confession, *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes*; still you are in the same condition that Cornelius was before his conversion, and may learn from his story, that before you can have hope towards God, you must *send for Peter, and hear words whereby you must be saved*. Plead what you will for yourselves; if you could say to God, what you know you cannot say—Lo, here is a fair account of my daily prayers, and good deeds; lo, here is a life in the main exact and spotless, and squared by the rule of thy commandments;" his answer to us one and all is, *send for Peter, search the Scriptures*, listen to those who proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to thee in my name, give up the thoughts, give up the pride of thy heart, let *Me* save thee.

There is another particular worthy of observation in this history of Cornelius, which is, God's stated method of helping us, and bringing us to the knowledge of the truth. As it is in the natural world, so it is in spiritual things, and in the great affair of our conversion; God works in the use of means, and does not ordinarily work without them. As he has put things into a constant, regular course to supply our bodily wants, gives bread to the sower, and feeds man in the

way of his own labour, though he could do it immediately, and without the use of any such means; so he acts with regard to our souls, not speaking to us directly from heaven, but making use of men as his instruments; insomuch that one man's salvation depends greatly upon the instruction, advice, persuasion, and example of another, and sometimes almost upon a word speaking from a weak creature like ourselves. So when Jesus had appeared to Paul, and could as easily have finished his conversion as he begun it, he left him to the ministry and teaching of Ananias. Acts ix. So when the Eunuch was to be converted, the angel of the Lord sent Philip to open the Scriptures and preach Jesus to him. Acts viii. And so here in the case of Cornelius, though God in a wonderful manner prepares the way for his salvation by the knowledge of Christ, first appearing to him, and then to Peter in order to it, yet the words whereby he and his house were to be saved, must come from Peter's mouth. And God still proceeds in the same method, sending and calling to man by man, as he does this day to you by me. For though the work of conversion is his, and he gives the increase, though Christ must be with his ministers alway, even to the end of the world, to bless and prosper

prosper their endeavours, yet if they do not plant and water, no effect will follow in the ordinary course of things. God grant I may speak the mystery of Christ boldly as I ought to speak, and that I may not always speak to you in vain ! I beseech you even now in his name, be ye reconciled to him. Nay, my brethren, I have spoken, and, with his help, will speak to you the words of eternal life. Only have pity on your own souls ; see in this your day the things which belong to your everlasting peace. Say not in the bottom of your hearts, what have we do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth, calling us to take up our cross and follow thee, art thou come to torment us ? Let it not be said that you hate knowledge, and do not chuse the fear of the Lord, lest that dreadful sentence overtake you, *as for those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.* Consider with yourselves, what would you have thought of Cornelius, if he had slighted Peter's message when he came to him ? If it had been left upon record that he turned a deaf ear to the heavenly instruction that was brought him, would you not have thought him a very stupid, inconsiderate person,

person, fatally blind to his own interest, unthankful to God, and utterly unworthy of the least degree of mercy from him? And what better are we, if we always resist the Holy Ghost, harden our hearts in unbelief, and continue unconverted under the word of life, by the appointment and grace of God ministered unto us? For God still sends his messengers and ambassadors upon the same errand of converting and saving men, and is still ready to accompany it with his power, and has the same will to make it as effectual to their salvation, as it was to Cornelius. But what I would observe farther to you upon this head is, that though the ministers of the Gospel are chiefly appointed to the work, and watch for your souls as they that must give account, and upon the peril of *their* souls must keep back nothing that is profitable for you, yet they are not the only persons who are capable of acting in God's stead, and authorised to do it. It is in the power of all others to help every man his brother, by speaking a word in season; and their duty to do it, as God gives them ability; and they will do it, if they have a lively sense of God's mercies in Christ upon their own minds, and of the dangerous condition of those

who are still in the darkness of their heathen state, and who though in words they profess Christ, yet deny him in their works, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. And what is here said more especially concerns masters and mistresses of families, who are certainly as much bound to take care of the souls as the bodies of all that belong to them; whose authority would greatly enforce whatever they do of this kind in God's name, and their words no doubt in many instances be blessed to the spiritual, everlasting advantage of their children and servants, and of husband and wife to each other. The seed may perish, but if it is not sown we are sure it will never grow. God waits for, and waits upon man's endeavours in this as he does in other cases, and does not work without them. Therefore, if thou wouldst be a Christian, speak, and hold not thy peace, and know that God is with thee to help thee. Own him in thy family by prayer, and Scripture reading, and let all about thee see that thou art more concerned for their and thine own *eternal*, than temporal welfare. If thy words fall to the ground, thou hast delivered thy own soul, but thou canst not be entitled to the blessing

sing of faithful Abraham, if like him thou dost not command thy children and thy household after thee to keep the way of the Lord. Gen. xviii. 19.

Having thus opened the history of Cornelius, and made such observations upon it as I thought worthy of your consideration; I shall another time, with God's help, set before you the words whereby he and his house were saved. The Lord prepare you for it. Read them Acts x. Come prepared to the ministry of the word; receive it with meekness, with full submission to it, and earnest desire to profit by it; that so the Holy Ghost, whose coming to quicken a world dead in trespasses and sins, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord, by faith in Christ, and faithful subjection to him, we this day commemorate, may take possession of your souls and bodies, and seal them to the great day of redemption; that by the same Spirit we may all rise from our graves with God's mark in our foreheads, and enter into the joy of our Lord.

“ God, who as at this time didst teach
“ the hearts, &c.”

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Well, brethren; salvation is the errand upon which Peter is sent, and which Cornelius was beforehand prepared to receive. We may well suppose that the interval betwixt the angel's appearing and Peter's coming to him, was an awful, dreadful point of time with him, and could not pass without deep reflection and many a troubled thought. It is probable he thought himself in a good way before, and had never entertained the least doubt concerning his state. And yet he is plainly given to understand that he had every thing to learn, and that God's truth was not yet come to him. He would naturally think with himself, I can have no doubt of the heavenly vision; I saw it evidently; and if what I am told in it is true, I am this moment in a most dangerous condition, and must perish if I die before the saving words are brought to me. O with what concern, and trembling expectation, would this serious man wait for the hour of Peter's arrival! Who would not have wished to see with what eager transport he would run to meet and receive him; and especially, who would not have been present in that little assembly to hear the words of life; who would not but have heard St. Peter preach! He to whom Christ

I himself

himself gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven—a perfect understanding of the way in which men should be admitted into it, and authority to declare it; he who was an eye witness of the majesty of Christ, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; he who was particularly commanded, when he was converted, to strengthen his brethren; he who had denied his master with oaths and curses, but nevertheless obtained mercy, and therefore could speak of the pardoning love of God to others with more boldness and assurance; how desirable must it have been to hear *him* making known the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and receive the words of grace and salvation from *his* lips! and if nothing of his had been left upon record for the information and comfort of believers in all future ages, how should we have lamented the loss, and thought ourselves unhappy in being deprived of the instructions of so eminent an Apostle! Why, blessed be God, here are the words he spoke upon this great, interesting occasion; here is the very sermon, amongst others, which he preached to Cornelius when he opened the kingdom of heaven to him, and in him to the whole body of the Gentiles. And

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the words of it are as powerful now in God's hands as they were then; the Holy Ghost is still ready to accompany it, and it would as certainly be blessed to your conversion and establishment in the faith, as it was to his, if you could but say with him, *now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God.* x. 33. Let us attend; with this belief, that to us is the word of this salvation sent, and that God now commands our attention to it.

X. 34, 35. *Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him—accepted, not for his own righteousness; for that Cornelius could not be, as I have before shewed at large, but to God's; to a righteousness of his appointing, which he freely bestows, and can accept; to a new and holy state of grace, pardon, and the hope of eternal life in and through a Mediator. For not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saves us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he sheds on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* Tit. iii. 5, 6. And his meaning

meaning is exactly agreeable to, and well explained by these words of St. Paul, *is he the God of the Jews only, is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also.* Rom. iii. 29. So that they *who sometimes were far off, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise* (made to the Jews) *are made nigh by the blood of Christ.* And to this sense St. Peter explains himself; for thus he goes on:

Ver. 36. *The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all)—The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, and which Peter was now sent to preach to the Gentiles, you see, is peace with God by Jesus Christ: for that he is appointed heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. hath all power given him in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 18. to govern, bless, and save mankind; all who come unto God by him, receive him into their hearts by faith, submit to his laws, and take him for their Lord and King to reign over them. So that let them be what they will in other respects, if they refuse this, there is no other possible way of justification for them.*

Ver. 37, 38. *That word, I say, you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which*

*which John preached: How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him—that there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth—that salvation had been already first offered to all the people of the Jews in his name, according to the will of God—that John Baptist had prepared them for it, by preaching the doctrine of repentance—and that he had made full proof of his being sent of God, to destroy the devil's power and kingdom, and cast him out of the possession he had gotten in the souls and bodies of men—these things St. Peter tells them they could not but know. But alas! as yet they knew them at best only by hearsay, as too many do now; and Christ must be known by them in another manner, by a true faith in him and hearty acceptance of salvation by him, from an inward sense of their want of him, before he could be a Saviour to them. And this they did, by that time St. Peter had spoken a few plain words more; for, says he, ver. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43. *We are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree;**

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Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

So that the sum of St. Peter's preaching upon this occasion was to this effect—That man wants peace with God, and that Christ is the peace-maker—That we obtain remission of sins, and reconciliation with God through his name, and for his sake only, and by faith in his precious blood-shedding — That John Baptist must first be the preacher of repentance to us, or, that there is no way of coming at so great a benefit, and applying Christ by faith to ourselves for salvation, but by a knowledge of our sinful state, a hatred of all sin, and a will to forsake it — for that he who is our Saviour, is also ordained to be our Judge, and can be the author of eternal life only to them that obey him, and are so wrought upon by his goodness, as to make suitable returns

returns of love to him, by doing whatsoever he commands them.

Such are the words by which Cornelius and all his house were to be saved, and *were* saved. The Lord opened their hearts, and they received them gladly. For while Peter yet spake, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. ver. 44. *i. e.* the Holy Ghost fell on them in miraculous powers and effects, as he did upon the apostles at the day of Pentecost, such as speaking with tongues, and magnifying, or praising God by inspiration. And this was done to shew that God was now returned to the Gentiles, and was an evident, solemn declaration of his gracious purpose to take them for his people in common with the Jews, and make them fit for himself, by taking possession of them by his Spirit. Not that they were therefore saved, or secured from all possibility of ever falling away, because they had these extraordinary gifts conferred upon them; for Christ tells us that many should prophesy, and cast out devils in his name, and yet be rejected, as being workers of iniquity, and unrenewed in the depth of their hearts. But these gifts were necessary at that time for the conversion of others; and they were moreover an earnest

and a token to all, that God would dwell in them by his Spirit; which should guide them into all truth, confirm them in the faith, and make them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, if they faithfully adhered to him, by prizing and seeking after his graces, and endeavouring to perfect holiness in the fear of God. For the preaching of Peter was the favour of life to them only by the secret operation of the Spirit upon their hearts. In this way he was the author and giver of life, and an inward witness to them, *i. e.* by their effectual calling and conversion, and faithfulness unto death. So he is to all, to the end of the world, who desire his coming and presence in their souls, the Holy Ghost the Comforter, in his perpetual, and best office in the church; making the words of Christ, his apostles, and ministers, saving words to us, by enlightening our understandings, sanctifying our affections, converting our wills, working faith in us, and inclining us to obey from the heart that form of sound doctrine which is delivered us.

These blessed words of truth and peace, of grace and mercy from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, of redemption

tion and salvation, how have they been received by you? And does conscience bear you witness in the Holy Ghost, that you rest your souls upon them, frame your lives according to them, seek your best comfort from them, and make them the foundation of all your hopes? Has the Lord proved and visited your hearts with them, bringing you in repentance and humility before his mercy-seat for grace to help in time of need, raising you to a chearful trust and confidence in him for the remission of your sins, and acceptance through Christ, and confirming you in the obedience of faith? Or do they carry a dead sound with them, finding no admittance, raising no hope, giving no comfort; or if they are heard with joy at the first, and gain our approbation and consent in some degree for a time, yet working no real conversion, producing no lasting effect? Or, what is worst of all, do we make the glad tidings of mercy by the Gospel to a perishing world a pretence for continuing in sin, and hardening ourselves against the love and fear of God, and so turning it into poison and a snare to our souls, and utterly defeating his whole purpose in offering it to us?

I say, what think you of Christ, and his Gospel of peace, in the remission of sins? Are you endued with this leading, necessary point of knowledge, that you are sinful creatures, in a state of great disorder, weakness, and corruption, alienated from the God that made you in your wills, desires, and affections, apt to forget, prone to disobey him, and that this is a state of misery and condemnation, and you must be undone without help from the Lord? Do you know indeed, and find within yourselves, that the help he offers you by Jesus Christ is such as you want, and exactly suited to the case of sinners; and have you a will to receive and a desire to improve it, to your present comfort, and everlasting advantage? What an awakening, full proof have we here, in the case of Cornelius, of the necessity of Christ for every soul of man; and that there is no acceptance with God, no kind of life will stand us in any stead, without being accepted to an interest in the Saviour? Christ himself hath spoken the word, and it must stand for ever against all the thoughts and imaginations of our hearts — *no man cometh to the Father but by me.* John xiv. 16. *i. e.* to God's covenant of peace and forgiveness here, or glory hereafter,

after, but by being washed from his sins in the blood of Christ, made partaker of his righteousness, and quickened to newness of life by his Spirit. Every man in the world lies under a sentence of death, and has a body of sin to be freed from; the guilt of it must be taken away, and the power of it subdued in him. He cannot deliver himself, he cannot conquer death, atone for his transgressions, or make himself a new heart and a new spirit; and therefore, if ever he is saved, he must fly to the mercy of God as a sinner, accept of deliverance from him in the way of his appointing for all men, and receive this saying of St. Peter—*to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.* Not be rewarded for his own righteousness, or the merit of his good deeds; he must let that alone for ever; that is no plea for condemned, sinful man. Alas! what do we think of, where are those good deeds of our's which must make Christ of no effect, what are they in the best of men, when they are tried by the line and the plummet, and laid to the strait rule of God's commandments? No; but thy salvation, O man, is by the grace of forgiveness, and that forgiveness clearly purchased

for thee by the Son of God, suffering the wrath of God in thy stead, and for thee, a sinner, without which thou must have suffered the penalty of thy sins for ever in hell. When thou art established in the sense and belief of this great goodness of thy God towards thee, and of the strangeness of thy deliverance by mercy, far beyond what thou couldst ever think of, then, and not before, thou mayest be a faithful, sincere man, and set thyself to please God in all holy obedience; then thou mayest say in thy heart, what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits, and how shall I ever love Christ enough for the great love wherewith he loved me? and what thou dost in this disposition, and from a root of true faith, will be an acceptable service. But yet it must not, cannot be the ground of thy acceptance to the reward of eternal life. Christ is that foundation, and if thou layest any other, it will be at the peril of thy soul. Still thou must be a pardoned man in every thing, in thy best as well as worst estate, from one end of thy life to the other; and if ever thou hast true comfort in thyself, and good hope towards God, it must be through grace. Take especial notice therefore, that the words by which Cornelius and

and his house were saved, are the same by which all others must be saved; I mean, by the Holy Ghost working with them, and setting them home upon our hearts. St. Peter knew of no other method of salvation, than remission of sins by Jesus Christ, in order to a covenant state of holiness, and newness of nature by the power of the Holy Spirit; and if we may judge from his other sermons, this was the burthen of all his preaching. In one, and that the first Christian sermon that ever was preached after the descent of the Holy Ghost, he says, *repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.* Acts ii. 38. In another, *repent ye, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, that so the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.* iii. 19. In a third, *there is salvation in no other.* iv. 12. In a fourth, *Him hath God exalted to his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins.* v. 31. So that these words “who-so-ever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins,” you see did not drop from St. Peter’s mouth as it were by chance; but came from his heart, where they

they had been deeply imprinted by the finger of God. It was the very word which God sent, and sent him and the other apostles to preach every where, and which they all sealed with their blood. Peace by Jesus Christ, the Lord of all,—possessor of his saints by gift from God, and of heaven for them by purchase—was the heart of God opened to man, all his wisdom could contrive, and all his love could do, for our salvation from that unhappy state of blindness, corruption, and enmity against him, we were fallen into. And it is much to be observed, and what we should greatly lay to heart in this our day, that the goodness of God can go no farther; here almighty love is at an end with us; there remaineth no more, or other, sacrifice for sin; if it is unpurged by faith in the blood of atonement, we must lie under the burden of it for ever. He who is appointed to be the judge of quick and dead, and will one day separate the precious from the vile; as he ordered his disciples to shake of the very dust of their feet for a testimony against those who would not receive his Gospel of peace, in token of their desperate hardness, and utter rejection, so he cannot deny himself, but will infallibly make good his words in their eternal

eternal condemnation. O! why will we not accept of life and peace from God, and shew that we do so by our love of Christ, and faithfulness in his service? Why do we not consider, and understand more what the Lord has done, and will do for us? Where are the earnest, daily prayers for deliverance, and to be kept safe to his heavenly kingdom? Why do we slight so many opportunities of sealing with God, and assuring to ourselves the benefits of Christ's death and passion, in the most comfortable Sacrament of his body and blood? Where is that sense of our natural misery and undone state, which would make every one of us say, *if I may but touch the hem of his garment I shall be whole?* For these are the things, these are the inward workings and outward expressions of them, which must prove our Christianity to ourselves and others; and thus it is that *the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.* Rom. viii. 16. Baptism, church-going, or an outward form only of any kind, is nothing, and worse than nothing, if Christ is not working at the root of our profession; as it shuts us up in blindness and self-deceit, and hinders our closing with him for salvation. To see and ac-
knowledge

knowledge our corruption, weakness, and condemnation in sin, is the first step towards our recovery: to come to Christ as an all-sufficient Saviour, and venture our souls upon him by faith, gives us a right to all the blessings he has purchased for us: and if we have happily got over these two steps in our Christian course, our next care will be to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, adorn the doctrine of Jesus Christ by a suitable, holy life, and *let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glory our Father which is in heaven.* Here is a man in whom the Spirit dwells and Christ reigns. The words whereby we must be saved are indeed become saving words to him; God has brought them home to his heart, and they are turned into the nourishment of his soul; and unless the truth and promise of God can fail, every thing shall work together for his good. The remainder of sin in him will find daily work for his repentance and prayers; but his faith tells him that he has an Advocate with the Father, and such a righteousness from Christ as he may boldly plead before God. Let me speak this to thee, and do thou speak it to thyself, O fearful, doubting Christian. Others boldly venture

venture all upon mercy, though they are not qualified for it, and without renouncing their sins, or desiring a change of their wills and affections. But if thou art grieved, and wearied with the burthen of thy sins, and willing to be a new creature, question not one of the promises, nor thy interest in them. When thou hearest words from God whereby thou mayest be saved, do not dishonour him so much, nor be such an enemy to thy own peace, as to think he does not mean what he says; but firmly believe that there is unspeakable grace, almighty love, and everlasting truth in those words, and that with his help they will assuredly save *thee*. Think with thyself, that so long as thou art in this heartless, doubting frame, thou art hindered by it from going on to perfection, and that the love of God cannot have it's effect upon thee in bringing thee to a chearful obedience. Let the sense of thy unworthiness always keep thee humble, but let nothing daunt thee; the mercy of God, and the blood of Christ, is above all thy sins.

On the other hand, let none of us presume upon the mercy of God, or take it to ourselves in a wicked, or a careless way. For his threatenings are as plain, and as
true

true as his promises ; and *if we live after the flesh*—having our hearts upon the world, thinking we believe when we have no knowledge or belief of our sinful state, or dread of sin, without any other goodness than nature can help us to, and unrenewed by the Holy Ghost—*we shall die*—eternally. The mercy of God in the forgiveness of our sins gives us all the encouragement we can desire, and is a sacred bond upon us to forsake them, and was proclaimed to the world for this very end, *that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.* But our faith is vain, and our religion good for nothing, if it does not mortify sin, and increase the love of God in us.

God grant we may know the Saviour according to the tenour of these words of St. Peter—that as he went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, so he may heal all the distempers of our souls—that upon the call of John Baptist to repentance, we may see, and hate those sins of ours, which slew, and hanged him on the tree—that we may say that Jesus is the Lord by the Holy Ghost, by whom only we can say it, and gladly believe in him for the remission of all our
sins,

sins, present peace, and final acceptance with God—and that in this belief we may live to him, for the great love wherewith he loved us, and behave so worthily under him, as to meet him with joy at his second coming to judge the quick and dead. May the good Spirit take possession of us, and seal us to that blessed time; that Christ may present us to the Father washed in his blood; and that we may for ever ascribe all honour, praise, and thanksgiving to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons, distinct in themselves, and having distinct offices in the salvation of man, but one God blessed for evermore.

S E R M O N V.

I PET. II. 1, 2, 3.

*Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile,
and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil
speakings,*

*As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of
the word, that ye may grow thereby :*

*If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gra-
cious.*

SAINTE Peter, in the foregoing chapter, having spoken of the glory of Christ, of faith in the sprinkling of his blood, of the hope of believers by his resurrection from the dead, and poured out his sense of the great blessings they were received to, from the fulness of a joyful heart ; proceeds in the next place to shew what they were to build upon this foundation, and what obligations they were under from the mercy of God in Christ to improve it to newness of life, unfeigned love, and pure obedience.

Wherefore,

Wherefore, i. e. seeing you have been begotten again by the word of life which has been preached to you, born of incorruptible seed, and made the children of God by adoption and grace; remember that you are now to live suitably to such a high and happy state, and be careful above all things to preserve it, and to this end laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

The words are very instructive, and contain a great deal in a small compass, easily remembered, and not difficult to be understood. And I observe this to convince you, if it pleases God, how poor a covering it is for your ignorance and unbelief which you are so apt to fly to, of want of time or learning to know much of Scripture. The whole faith and duty of a Christian are many times comprised in few words, not to encourage sloth and idleness in any, or prevent our diligent reading and studying of all Scripture; but for the benefit and comfort of all, and to take away all excuses from the busiest and most unlearned part of mankind: seeing that the knowledge of salva-

tion may be easily attained, carried about in memory, and laid up in our hearts. The words I have now read to you are an instance of this, amongst many others; and I pray God make you sensible of it, teach where I cannot, and imprint them in the depth of your souls. There are three particulars in the text which, with God's help, I shall open to you in the order they are mentioned.

I. St. Peter's exhortation to *lay aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings.*

II. *As new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.*

III. The motive or reason for so doing, contained in the words, *if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

I. We are exhorted to *lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings.* Would ye be Christians indeed, the disciples of Jesus, to receive a law at his mouth, to follow his example, to live unto God by him? look well at these words of St. Peter. Here is the rule you must walk by, and the mark you are to

be aiming at. The evil tempers of your fallen nature must be seen and resisted. The graceless passions of the old man must come under the discipline of the law of Christ, to be restrained and subdued. It must be a weighty matter upon your minds, a first principle never to be disputed, a point of which you are clearly convinced, and fully settled in once for all, that as the children of faith, and heirs of the grace of God, you must lay aside, check and mortify, with the utmost sincerity of endeavour, as much as lieth in you, and as God shall enable you, all *malice*: in general, all manner of wickedness, and particularly that evil quality, so inconsistent with a Christian state of love, so destructive of your own peace, and so mischievous to others, of bearing malice or ill-will in case of injury, or on any account whatsoever, to any soul of man.

And all guile and hypocrisies: all fraud and dissimulation; never purposing to deceive, never speaking what you do not think, never doing what you would be ashamed of if it was known; but acting steadily in all cases by the rule of conscience, and with the same clearness, simplicity, and uprightness of intention, as if you had a window in your breast for all your

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thoughts

thoughts and designs to be seen by all the world, and knowing that you are always naked and open to the eye of God. *And envies*; neither grudging at another man's lot, nor repining at your own; but rejoicing in his prosperity, and taking what God gives you as an alms, with thankfulness, and chearful submission to the will of his providence. Here is a word more, and that is, *evil-speakings*; the tongue never to be governed, till we have learned to govern ourselves by the fear of God, and the love of our neighbours; which in spite of all the pretensions we can make to religion, peaceableness, and good-will, in spite of all pretences to the contrary, betrays the evil disposition of the heart; the tongue, that unruly member, must be kept in subjection, and all evil-speakings laid aside. And for the same reason, all evil-hearing too; I mean, that we must neither speak evil of any man ourselves, nor take a secret pleasure in hearing his character slandered by others; for both proceed from the same root of pride, self-ignorance, and uncharitableness. Indeed, my brethren, all this is strict. Some can make a tolerable shift from natural conscience, worldly prudence, or sense of reputation, to keep themselves clear

clear of outward scandalous sins ; but St. Peter will not be content with this ; he is here teaching us to judge ourselves by another rule, and carrying every man into the depth of his heart. I say, you may observe, that he is here prescribing a law to our inward parts ; and striking at those evil qualities in us, which though they do not much prejudice our reputation, or worldly interest, are nevertheless odious in the sight of God, full proof of our corruption, and eating like a canker at the root of our happiness. You may not be an adulterer, nor a drunkard, nor a profane swearer, nor a Sabbath-breaker, nor a thief ; but if you are under the power of malice, and envy, deceitful and insincere, and destitute of that pure love, which by ruling in your heart would set a guard upon your mouth, and keep the door of your lips, you are not in the way of peace and holiness ; you are not in a Christian state ; you are *in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*. Acts viii. 23. i. e. if you are not convinced of the evil of these tempers, nor striving against them. This is the work we must be doing in obedience to God, and with full persuasion of the necessity of it. For *he* it is who says by the mouth of St. Peter, *lay aside all*

malice, and all guile and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings; do not think it enough to make clean the outside of the cup and the platter, and justify yourselves before men, Luke xi. 39, and xvi. 15. but if you would come to the true knowledge of yourselves, and form a right judgment of your state, look where God does; look at the heart; see what passes there, whether the evil motions of it have been discovered and brought before God in repentance, and whether you are watching and praying against them. I beseech you take notice of what I am saying; and observe the difference between any kind of outward behaviour, and an inward spiritual work of reformation. One has nothing of God in it, and while it is rested in will keep you from Christ; the other begins with God, leads to faith, and is a true work upon that ground, with regard to every sin, open or secret. It is true, where there is nothing in the outward behaviour contrary to the rule of the Gospel, we are obliged in charity to think and hope the best; but if you look no farther for yourselves, you are undone. There is a world of iniquity in the heart, well known to God; and if it never was searched in his presence by the light of his word
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shining upon the conscience, you never truly repented, never knew how much you have to be forgiven, never came sincerely to Christ for it, never applied your endeavours in the right place, by laying the axe to the root of the tree. What is the reason that so many talk of their good hearts? It is because they are utter strangers to them, and in all their lives, never passed one half hour in their company. What is the reason that they are, even to themselves, as graves which appear not, outwardly fair, and carrying a handsome inscription in their foreheads, within full of stench and corruption; but because they never smelt into their own bosoms? Why do they know so little of Christ, prize him so little, and think so meanly of their obligations to him, but because they never were pinched with a sense of their poverty and nakedness; and do not go to the bottom of their case? And what can this wretched ignorance, and shuffling with their duty proceed from, but judging of themselves by an imperfect rule; and if they can but fashion their outward man to some kind of conformity to it, making no account of those sins, which the apostle here brings to our view, taking no care to purge themselves from all filthiness, both

of flesh and spirit, nor casting their eyes with any degree of concern upon that inward defilement which has overspread their souls like a leprosy? And on the other hand, what is the reason, why those who are in earnest with God and their souls, the awakened and converted, confess and lament their sins, without guile or hypocrisy, but because they know them, and go with the Spirit into the depth of their hearts? And therefore knowing what a body of death they carry about with them, dare not stir an inch from Christ in their very best estate; but keep close to him for pardon and strength to fight against all inward corruption, as well as outward sin; laying hold on mercy, and at the same time endeavouring faithfully in the sense of it to approve themselves to that God, to whom “all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid.”

Let this then be the instruction, and advice of the first head: you must not deny, excuse, or extenuate the prevalence which these and other secret sins have in you; while you do, you are hidden from yourselves, without Christ, and strangers to a work of Grace. And when you do know them by help from above, it is your business

ness, as Christians, to resolve and endeavour to lay them aside; *all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking*s. The help we are to make use of for this purpose, the way and means of attaining to so desirable an end, will appear under the second head;

II. Which is St. Peter's exhortation to all, *as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby.*

Sincere, as coming from God; every way fitted to maintain the new life he gives, to preserve the soul in health and vigour, and feed us for eternity; pure without the mixture of any ill quality, and not like mother's milk, which many times has the seeds of disease in it, and conveys ill humours as well as nourishment, and at the best can only feed us for a dying life, which must soon have an end. But the living, or life-giving word of God, the Apostle tells us in the foregoing chapter, *endureth for ever*; he means in it's effects, and as being the instrument of that new birth by which we are made alive unto God, and can no more die than Christ himself, whose life in us it is, when we are grafted into him by faith, and become members

bers of his body. That word, he adds, *which by the Gospel is preached unto you*; which brings you the glad tidings of peace with God, deliverance from the curse of sin, restoration from death and hell, and is your guide and sure title to the joys of heaven. *Desire it*, says he, let the will of your souls be to it, hunger and thirst after it, take it, feed upon it daily, *desire it as new-born babes*. Oh! this is saying a great deal. You know that new-born babes have but one appetite, one single desire for their food, cry for it, can be pleased and satisfied with nothing else, do what you will to them, and must perish without it. Even so, says the blessed Apostle, with the same eagerness, singleness, and purity of intention, *desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*, as you certainly will, if your desire is purely to it; to know what God has therein revealed for your benefit and great comfort, what he has done for you, and what you must do for yourselves to follow it's directions, to take it into your hearts, to be made wise unto salvation, and nourished by it to eternal life. Let me tell you briefly what you will find in it; the entrance of sin and death into the world; the earth cursed, and heaven lost;
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the cause of what you would otherwise have been ignorant of, why the body is liable to pain, sickness, and death; why the soul, made at first after the image of God, is now poisoned to the very root, dark in all its faculties, turned from God, as weak as it is corrupt, and dead in trespasses and sins. Behold the depth of your fall in Adam. But if you give way to this knowledge of yourselves, and are willing to understand the truth of your case, as it is declared in Scripture, behold in the next place, what hope it has for you, and what mercy and deliverance it brings you from God. There you will see the light of heaven rising upon a dark world; the Son of God descending with a message of grace and reconciliation, and working our redemption by himself; taking our nature upon him, that in it, and for it, he might fulfil all righteousness; make satisfaction to justice, pay the debt of our sin by his own sufferings and death, discharge us from condemnation, and restore us to the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life. I mention only these two points, our fall and death in Adam, and recovery by Jesus Christ, because they are the principal, by far the most concerning, the sum and substance of Scripture. All others
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are only subordinate to these, and chiefly intended to illustrate and guide us to them. With this light in your hands, you will see clearly every step of your way; without it, you will find nothing else in the Scripture. And one of these is likewise in order to the other; that knowing your death and condemnation in sin, you may fly in the peril of your souls to Christ, the salvation of Israel, the light of the Gentiles, the mercy of God to a lost world, and the hope of all the ends of the earth. This is that blessed word of redemption, which is the glory of all Scripture, and runs through it as a golden thread, which was preached to our first parents in that original promise, *the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head*, Gen. iii. 15. and delivered by them to their posterity, as the sole ground of their trust and hope towards God; which was renewed and confirmed to Abraham and David; spoken of by all the prophets; and fulfilled in the coming and person of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is that word, which on the day of Pentecost converted three thousand souls, has since brought many millions to God, and is as powerful as ever in the Spirit's hands to *open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the*
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the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. Acts xxvi. 18. This is that word, which by the mercy of God is sent, and now preached to you, written and put into your hands, *that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the only Saviour of sinners, and that believing you might have life through his name.* John xx. 31. This is that sincere, nourishing, wholesome word, which St. Peter exhorts you to desire, as infants do their milk; to study it diligently, to attend upon the preaching of it, to endeavour as God shall enable you to understand every thing belonging to it, leading to it, or flowing from it, it's doctrines, it's promises, it's commands, to the end you may grow thereby. As I said before, you will, if you desire, and use it for this end. It will be an infallible means of *your growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Pet. iii. 18. Not so much by any virtue or power of it's own, or by our own endeavours working with it, as by the grace of the same Spirit which gave it, and always speaks in and with it, to every sincerely desiring soul. You know it is one of it's peculiar doctrines, and great excellencies,
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that it sends us to him, as the author and giver of life, by whom we shall be helped effectually, to the utmost of our wants and desires; and by whom alone we can believe to the saving of the soul, and walk worthy of our high and holy calling.

These words of St. Peter, now brought to your remembrance, and briefly opened by me, may by the blessing of God be a means of begetting or increasing an earnest, pure desire for the sincere milk of the word. But I must say something more upon the occasion; and may the Spirit of all grace help you to apply it. Here then is your test; and by this you may prove yourselves, whether you are in the faith or not, Christians, or unbelievers. *If you sincerely desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby; if you come to it with delight and appetite, as to the food of your souls, provided of God, to improve in saving knowledge, to be confirmed in the truth, to know God, to know Christ, to know yourselves, to know sin more and more, to receive whatever it teaches, relating either to faith or practice, with the simplicity of little children, and to be kept in the way of salvation; you have an assured, comfortable proof within yourselves of a Christian state, and that a work of grace*

is begun, and carrying on in you. For a formalist can do nothing of this. He may come to hear the word preached; he may take up the Bible, and read a portion of it, even daily, supposing it to be a duty, and because his conscience will not let him be easy in the neglect of it; but he does not desire it as a child does the breast for growth, and nourishment in faith, and holiness. He has no such thought or intention; and especially no prayer accompanying it, to have what he reads opened to his understanding, and set home upon his heart. St. James says, *he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he becometh himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.* James i. 23, 24. What then are you doing, and what is your hope as Christians, when you seldom or never read the word of God, and find in yourselves no manner of desire to be acquainted with its sacred contents, no appetite or relish for the heavenly food it sets before you? Verily the case is plain; you are not believers, you are not in Christ; you are nothing but baptised heathens. Do what else you will, if you are never so civil, sober and prudent, if you come constantly to church and sacraments,

ments, whatever you are in your own opinion, or in the esteem of the world; if you do not study and love the Bible, here is full proof against you, that you are not in the way of salvation. Your souls lost, and redeemed; God pitying you in your sad condition of sin and misery; Christ following you into the wilderness; the holy Spirit quickening you; peace in life, and comfort in death, heaven or hell your everlasting portion, as you refuse or embrace the mercy offered you: Are these the weighty matters which the word of God brings to your knowledge, and do you slight it, prefer an idle tale, or a song-book to it, saunter away your vacant hours, and especially your Sabbaths, without looking upon it, and as it were trample this pearl under your feet? Was it written on purpose that you might know the love of God and of Christ, and learn how to secure so great a benefit to yourselves; and do you live in woful ignorance of it, and value none of its instructions? My brethen, what can you say to this? And what plainer proof can be given of your being this day and hour in darkness and unbelief? I beseech you consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding. And if it
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pleases God, that you should take up a resolution to be more diligent for the time to come, in reading, hearing, and studying the word of life, do not think this is all you have to do, to bring yourselves into a better state; but read it, and pray over it, to the end it may bring you to Christ for peace with God, and the pardon of all your sins. For so, and not otherwise, you will comply with Saint Peter's exhortation in both its parts; *to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings; and as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.*

III. Which brings me to consider the reason for so doing, or the only ground on which it can be done, contained in these words, *if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* O! that if! it is a little word, but has a great weight hanging upon it. *If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*—if you have any sense or understanding of the grace of Christ, of the great deliverance which has been wrought for you, and of the happy change in your condition, any real belief of it, any value for it, any desire to keep it, you must, you will con-

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sider and lay to heart what return is required of you for so inestimable a benefit. You will think it the strongest of all arguments for doing what you are here called upon to do. You will endeavour, as much as possible, *to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil-speakings.* You will avoid and renounce them, as the bane of your hopes, and utterly inconsistent with your new state. You will now give yourselves up to God, to be renewed to his image in righteousness and true holiness; and you will also, *as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.* You will receive it as the proper food of your new life, with many thanksgivings to God, for giving and appointing it for that purpose, and working with you in the use of it; and you will no more expect that your souls should thrive and be in health, without it, than that your bodies should, without suitable nourishment. But what is it to *taste* that the Lord is gracious? certainly it can mean nothing less than a real, unfeigned, heart-felt sense of his grace and goodness, in delivering us from the misery of our condition in sin by dying for us, and recovering us to a state of favour with God,

God, as well-beloved children, and to the promise of an eternal inheritance in heaven, together with a belief and persuasion of our own interest in all he has done, and suffered for us; we having come in upon his call, taken our vow in baptism upon ourselves, given up our names to Christ, and trusting only in his meritorious bloodshedding, and all-sufficient righteousness, for the pardon of our sins, and eternal justification. And this, in all who are sincere with God, and believe to the saving of the soul, is accompanied with a farther taste and experience of the Lord as gracious to them, in bringing their wills over to his obedience, and inclining them very highly to esteem that other part of God's covenant in him, and receive it as another precious gift from him, that he will *put his laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts*. Read the whole of it in Heb. viii. And if your hearts can bear witness to the grace and truth of it, and you find in yourselves a desire and will to live to God according to it, you may be sure that he has been working in you, to raise you out of your dead state, and that you are of the number of those, who *have tasted that the Lord is gracious*. On the other hand it is

ments, whether your faith be weak or strong, in a higher or lower degree, you can say, you have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*: a great work has been wrought in you, and the Spirit has *opened your hearts to attend to the things which have been spoken* to you in the name of the Lord, for your present comfort and everlasting salvation. You are upon the one, right ground, the Gospel foundation of a pure obedience in love, and freedom of spirit, and can perceive a marvellous force of reasoning, a sweet attractive and powerful call to sincerity with God in the inner man in these words, *if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*. If your faith is weak, yet do not deny what God has done for you. Let not any man, let not your own fears, prevail with you to question the reality of it; but be thankful for it, as you well may, put it in exercise, and pray to the Lord to increase it. The man who said, *Lord help mine unbelief*, could say at the same time, that *he did believe*, was treated by Christ as a believer, and had his request. Mark ix. 24. You want more joy, more assurance of faith; your desire is good; and that very desire is a stronger proof of the truth of your faith, than you are willing to think it.

And if you would but make use of it, and proceed to build upon it, and encourage yourself in the Lord, and patiently wait his time for greater manifestations of his peace, the hope you have will assuredly support and carry you on in the work you have to do. Whereas, by always doubting of your faith, and concluding against yourself that God has given you nothing, because he has given more to others, you will be heartless in his service, think your time for working with him is not yet come, and sadly hinder your progress. St. John, has an engaging comfortable word for those whom he calls little children, and says, *he writes to them because their sins are forgiven them for his name's sake, and because they have known the Father*, in his grace and love, and as a reconciled Father in Christ. 1 John ii. 12, 13. Call upon your hearts to answer and say, *Abba Father*, as you believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, and in him are received to the adoption of sons; to the end you may keep yourselves in the love of God, and shew whose children you are, *by laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, and as new born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word,*
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that ye may grow thereby. If you are strong in faith, and find yourselves refreshed with abundance of peace, prove it to yourselves, prove it to all about you by its fruits. You know the glory of it belongs to God, and that he expects you should *shew forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, by being the salt of the earth, and shining as lights in the world.* 1 Pet. ii. 9. Matt. v. 13, 14.

As you have tasted the sweetness of Christ, you will long for more of it; and desire nothing so much as to be confirmed in his love, and shew your love to him in the way he so earnestly and affectionately requires it of you, by keeping his commandments. You will have a tender regard for the weak of the flock, and not despise the day of small things in any. You will be humble, you will be vigilant, you will be circumspect, and very much concerned for the honour of your master. You will endeavour, as much as possible, not to disgrace your holy profession in any one instance of outward behaviour; *if you have indeed tasted that the Lord is gracious,* you will follow St. Peter into the depth of your hearts, to strike at the root of all inward corruption; you will meet the Spirit there for a true

work of grace, and for ability to make the tree good that the fruit may be good also, And especially that word by which you have been taught to know your fall, and restoration, the mercy and truth, the justice and love of your God, to call upon him in the name of Jesus, and give yourselves up to the guidance of the eternal Spirit; which is God's covenant of peace to you brought down from heaven, confirmed by his oath, sealed with the blood of Christ, and written in your hearts by the Holy Ghost; that word, I say, which is the record of all your mercies, and all your hopes, you will value as your birth-right, and greatest earthly treasure, and above all things desire the sincere milk of it, *that ye may grow thereby in the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness in Christ.* Eph. iv. 13. The Lord grant it may be sealed to you in all the riches of its grace, that you may abound in thanksgivings to God for it, and say in your day, of the fulness of Gospel light, what the psalmist said in the spirit of prophecy, *'praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy*

thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities.
Pf. ciii. 1, 2, 3.

I would now gladly bespeak the attention of all to the doctrine and exhortation of the text. My brethren, the Lord is very gracious. He left the glory he was possessed of at God's right hand, and came into this world to be the most despised suffering man, that ever lived in it, that he might redeem us from our sin, misery, and death. And his servants believe and taste his goodness, and in the happy sense and experience of his love, feed continually upon the word, as new-born babes, for the growth of their Christian life; to keep their lamps burning, to have their faith strengthened, their hope animated, their charity warmed and enlivened, and to fashion themselves day by day, both outwardly and inwardly to the holiness of it. This, and nothing but this, is conversion; this is your only rule, though you turn yourselves into never so many shapes to avoid it; this is the way in which you are to walk with Christ, if you would belong to him, and have any share in his mercies. If you think of getting to heaven in any other, you are miserably deceived; and must not pretend to take St. Peter, or any
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of his fellow apostles for your guides. For they all speak the same things, with one mouth, from the same Spirit, and have no hope, nor message of grace, for any, but those who come to the Lord Jesus Christ for it, love him in sincerity, and diligently use all the means of growing up under him to greater measures of faith and holiness.

But nevertheless, if you have not attained to this, and do not find within yourselves that the words belong to you as believers, still they have a call, and a blessing for you. Let them speak to you as unbelievers, to convince you of your wants and danger. For it is one end of them to stir you up to repentance and calling upon God, and to set his mercies before you, that you may seek after them, and be made partakers of Christ and his benefits. Does St. Peter exhort you to *lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking*s; and did you never seriously purpose it; have you no will, no prayer for this? Does he say, *as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*; and is that word nothing to you, either not desired and applied for the pure end of spiritual growth,

or totally neglected, and many foolish pleas advanced to excuse your ignorance of it? When you hear that the ground and reason of your readiness to comply with both parts of the exhortation is to be found in your having tasted that the Lord is gracious; have you nothing in your hearts to answer to this? Has Jesus no comfort for you, no power over you, nor place in your affections? Do you know no more of him, than that you were baptised in his name, and taught to repeat it in your Creed; but have so little sense and belief of your want of him to save you from your sins, to bring you by repentance to faith, and by faith to holiness, that if you were to be baptised now, it would be the last thing you would think of?

If all this is against you, let St. Peter tell you of it now, what blessings you come short of, what grace you despise, and how vainly you pretend to the name and hope of Christians. And oh! think what you are, and what your condition is now, while I am speaking, that you may make haste and escape for your lives; fly to Jesus, as your refuge from death, and having tasted how gracious he is, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, by *laying aside*

aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings; and as new-born babes desiring the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby. The Lord grant it for his mercy's sake: and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore.

S E R M O N VI.

I PET. II. 4, 5.

To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

SAINT Peter, in the foregoing chapter, puts the Christians, to whom he wrote this epistle, in mind of the great benefits they had by their belief of the Gospel; and of the advantages they enjoyed above all that went before them, by living at a time when the whole counsel of God for the salvation of mankind was fully opened, and all his promises verified in the person and coming of Christ; to the end he might stir them up to live suitably to the mercy they had received, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure. The Spirit

Spirit of God was strong upon him, and his heart so full of the glorious subject that he could not contain his thoughts, but breaks out at once into this devout strain of thanksgiving—*blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, chap. i. 3. which hope, founded chiefly upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, whereby he was declared to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, with power, he tells them, was no less than that of *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them; and for all who shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. Of which salvation*, he says further, *the prophets*, who delivered it to the world many ages before, *enquired and searched diligently*; having an earnest desire to know as much as they could of what they were inspired by the Holy Ghost to declare; but not able clearly to understand it, or not with so great advantage as those who saw it in its full manifestation and accomplishment. To which purpose Christ said, speaking to the disciples, *many prophets and*
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righteous men have desired to see these things which ye see, and have not seen them, and to hear these things which ye hear, and have not heard them. Matt. xiii. 17. They saw them indeed, but darkly, and afar off. They had the same faith in Christ, the same promises, and the same hope of deliverance and redemption by Christ before his coming, that we have now; as it is said of Abraham in particular, *that he saw the day of Christ, and was glad,* John viii. 56. but then he was revealed to them less perfectly, and the promises of God could not be placed before their eyes in so strong a point of light, as they were to those, who by seeing him in person, had them confirmed beyond all doubt, and as it were put into their hands by actual possession.

May I speak a word to you upon this? Will you hear me? Has God a call and a blessing for the souls in this congregation? Oh! that we might all join our prayers for it with one mouth! Think, my brethren, what cause you have to bless God, for appointing your lot, and bringing you into the world at that time when all these things, every thing foretold by the prophets, relating to your salvation by Christ, is fulfilled, done, and past. The Saviour
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is not now preached to you as he who *was* to be born of a virgin, and die for our sins; but we know, by infallible testimony, that he *did* come into the world at the time appointed of the Father, proved himself to be the Son of God by the miracles he wrought, suffered upon the cross, rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost to abide with us for ever. We have not indeed seen him with our bodily eyes; but remember what he says, *blest are they that have not seen and yet have believed*, John xx. 29;—blest are they who hear and receive what is written of him, preached, and declared to them; *for there shall be a performance of all that has been told them*. They shall find him in his gracious presence in their hearts, *turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God*, reviving them with a sense of forgiveness, confirming them in the love of holiness, sweetening prosperity, and even affliction to them, making all things work together for their good, and cheering their souls with a blest hope of seeing him in heaven, and praising God for him to all eternity. I say, know your advantage, be thankful for your privilege; behold your birth-

birth-right. For St. Peter writes and speaks to you, as much as he did to the Christians of his own time, if you were prepared for it, in these blessed words, *whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls*: receiving it in part now, in your deliverance from the curse and power of sin; and if you *gird up the loins of your mind, be sober and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you, at the revelation of Jesus Christ*, when he comes to reward his faithful servants, sure to receive it hereafter, in the fulness of glory at God's right hand. These things, we are told, *the Angels desire to look into*. They did not know them once; they know them now only in the way that we do, as revealed to them by Christ's coming in our flesh; and the mystery of his incarnation and death, the mercy and wisdom of God, in the redemption of a lost world by his own eternal Son, is such a fresh discovery to them of the riches of his nature, as employs their deepest attention, fills them with devout admiration of his glory, and is their new and everlasting song of

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praise, in union with the redeemed, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.* Rev. v.

13. That you may be of this happy number, and die out of this world, only to join in the triumphant song of angels and glorified spirits, the Saviour, Jesus Christ, is now offered to you. If you come to him in humility and thankfulness, with knowledge of his benefits, and desire to be made partakers of them, you will, as St. Peter here tells you, be built into him as lively stones, in one spiritual house; you will enter upon your eternal employment now, and become *an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* And this leads me to the design I have in discoursing upon these words: *To whom coming*, i. e. to the Lord Jesus Christ, mentioned in the verse before, *as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.* I shall therefore, with God's help,

I. Consider what we come to Christ for.

II. What

II. What it is to come to him, or when we may be said to do so—And the opening of these two heads, will afford me occasion to explain to you the several expressions in the text. The Lord give you the hearing ear, and open all to your hearts!

I. What we come to him for. We come to him for what he is, and is here called, *a living stone*. Our Lord had been spoken of by the Prophet Isaiah, under this appellation, and he himself appealed to it in his reasoning with the Jews; and therefore St. Peter seems to delight in dwelling upon it, takes it up again in the three following verses, and has unfolded all the instruction contained in it. Which I hope to set before you the next opportunity; and shall confine myself at present to the expression in the text, *a living stone*. *A stone*, solid foundation, or rock, as being able to sustain the weight of what is built upon him, and support it against all the storms, and all the assaults of men and devils to destroy it; and he is here called *a living stone*, as being risen from the dead, and having life in himself from all eternity; to carry our thoughts beyond any earthly foundation, or building upon it, to what he is in himself,

and to that spiritual house, which Christians are when they are grounded on him. And to shew how all is upheld and strengthened by him in every respect, he is likewise called and calls himself *the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.* Eph. ii. 21. So then we come to him, that we also may be *as lively* or living stones, quickened by him, and in him *builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit*, as St. Paul says; or as St. Peter here says, *built up a spiritual house*. Not like the Jewish Temple, however adorned with goodly stones, nor any other edifice consisting only of dead materials, but a temple of the Holy Ghost, spiritually alive in every part and member of it; a temple of the living God, wholly consecrated to his service, in which he dwells and walks with us, and we glorify him in our bodies and spirits. And in this temple, the living stones in it, all together, and every one singly, are said to be *an holy priesthood*. The Jews had their high priest, and a whole tribe set apart to the office of ministering to God for the people. But this was an imperfect dispensation in many respects; the people by this means being kept,

kept, as it were, at a distance from God, and not allowed access to him; neither could the sacrifices which were offered by the priests on their behalf, obtain for them complete remission of sins, nor purge their consciences from *dead* or deadly *works*, to *serve the living God*, as pure in his sight, and clean from all spot of sin. Whereas now, the way to the holiest, or the presence of God, is laid open to all, and we are encouraged *to come boldly to the throne of grace*, as children to a father, and without any dread upon our spirits, on account of sin; the guilt of it being wholly removed, and the wall of separation betwixt God and us, broken down. We may now draw nigh to him as holy and spiritual, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*, i. e. cleansed from all outward and inward defilement, in full assurance of faith that our sins are forgiven, and that God according to his covenant remembers them no more. I say what I do, not only upon the warrant, but in the very words of Scripture; and I wish you knew and perceived it, that you might know and be thankful for your privilege. The conscience of a sinner is purged, not by having no sin remaining,

but none which God sees, and imputes as such; the guilt which tormented, the load which laid heavy upon the soul is taken off, and conscience has no more right to accuse and terrify the man for sin, than if it had never been committed: Is not this a most noble privilege, a desirable and happy change of our state, and what any one labouring under a sense of guilt, and dreading the displeasure of Almighty God, would give the world for? Hear, then, what St. Peter says, *We, all believers, are an holy priesthood*; which we cannot be, while God sees any spot or blemish of sin about us; and that I am sure can never be, by any will, work, or cleansing of our own. Seeing then we must be pure, to approach to God in his worship, and our own hearts bear witness against us that in ourselves we are wretchedly impure, and at an infinite distance from such a state, it is evident at once, that we can only be so by Jesus Christ. This therefore is one special end of our coming to him. And be it ever remembered, and assuredly believed, with great rejoicing in the conscience, and many thanksgivings, that through him our great High Priest, and as parts and members of his body, we are clean, spotless, holy, and

in him sanctified for the great purpose of offering spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God.

But notwithstanding the offer of such a privilege, though he came to a world of sinners, and was *chosen of God*, as every way qualified for the work of our redemption, *precious* to God as his only begotten Son, precious in himself, and a most precious gift of God to man, yet we are here told, we know, he was *disallowed of men*. His own people, the Jews, rejected and persecuted him, and at last crucified him as a malefactor, and a blasphemer; because he appeared amongst them as a spiritual deliverer, took the covering from their hearts, beat down their pride and high esteem of themselves, stripped them of their fancied righteousness, brought a heavy charge of sin against them, and called them to repentance, and the hope of salvation by him, instead of boasting of their works, and trusting in their own righteousness. For the same reason, however chosen of God, and precious, he is still disallowed. It is hard for men to see the accursed nature of sin, and more especially their own sinfulness; and till they do, they will not, they cannot repent nor see their want of such a Saviour.

Their pride blinds them, their ignorance ruins them. They do not come to Christ as a living stone, and as dead in themselves, to be built up and made lively stones in him; but in the bottom of their hearts entertain a higher opinion of themselves for salvation, than they do of him, thinking they have life in themselves, and vainly attempting to build a tower of Babel that may reach to heaven, upon the rotten foundation of their own works. They will be priests to God, unholy as they are, not seeing their miserable unworthiness; how unfit they are to offer any sacrifices to God, how utterly impossible it is for them to offer any spiritual, acceptable, sacrifices to him, of a pure worship from a pure conscience, but by Jesus Christ, and as cleansed and sanctified by him for that office. My brethren, this deceit lies deep in the heart of man. And that you may not be carried away with it, to the hazard of your souls, to the loss of Christ on whom you are to be built as your foundation for life, in whom alone you can be an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and by whom alone you are acceptable to God; let me now advise you,

II. To consider how we come to Christ, or when we may assure ourselves that we do. He is a living, life-giving stone; we are dead *as* stones, without power, without the will or thought to help ourselves, but may live, and be lively, by being built into him, the rock of our salvation. We were made and sent into the world to offer up spiritual sacrifices, to present our souls and bodies, a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, as our bounden duty, and reasonable service. Alas! we have no such hearts, no such wills, and are naturally averse to any pure, spiritual offering of ourselves to the high and holy God, though our dependence on him, union with him, and worshipping of him in spirit and in truth, is the great blessing of our lives, and will be our never-ending happiness in heaven.

But in Jesus Christ we are restored to the dignity and perfection of our natures, willingly to offer up ourselves, our prayers, our praises, our obedience, our hearts, continually to God; *He* in heaven, our great High Priest, standing at the right hand of God to present our spiritual sacrifices; *we* on earth, a holy priesthood, presenting them to him to be offered by him in the pure incense

cense of his blood, to the throne of grace on our behalf.

See now what it is to come to him. It is coming to him for the benefits here mentioned, as well as others, with a sense of our want of them and desire to receive them; and also with faith in him, as able and willing to be to us what he is here called, *a living stone*, and to make us an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and to make them acceptable to God. I say, we must not pretend to come to him in ignorance of our wants, or without the truth of desire to receive from him, what he knows to be necessary for us, or without faith in his goodness and all-sufficiency to help us. It is an easy thing to call him Lord, to repeat his name in our Creeds, and say we believe in him, because we have been taught it from our infancy; it is comparatively easy to take up a form of religion, to be very exact in it, and to outstrip many others in an outward shew; but he wants to do a great deal more for us than all this, and we must come to him for a great deal more. He wants to have us come to him, as what we are, poor beggars, undone and helpless in ourselves, and for what he is, our Saviour, our life. And
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this you must come to, if you turn yourselves into never so many shapes to avoid it; do what else you will, you are not the persons of whom St. Peter here speaks. They, he says, came, meaning that all are so to come, to Christ *as unto a living stone*, that in him they might as *lively stones, be built up a spiritual house*. Do you hear this; and does it lead you to consider, that in your natural state you are dead to God, and can never be made alive unto him, but by being taken into Christ? Has the sense of your danger and misery been so lively within you, and brought home to your hearts with such clear conviction, that you could not help crying out many a time and oft, *Lord, save me, or I perish?* Have you been made to see, that you cannot raise yourselves out of your dead state, by any will, work, or power of your own, and in this sight of your condition been willing that Christ should do it for you? Do you think he can? do you believe he will? dead as you are, build you as living stones into his spiritual house; all vile and polluted as you are in sin, make you priests unto God, holy and righteous in him, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable by him? Is this your design, your desire,

fire,

fire, your belief in coming to him; and what is more, have you done it? Consider what you say. If it was a worldly matter of any kind you wanted and had in view, a farm, a shop, a cottage, and much more a large estate, you would know what it was to desire and seek after it. If you had a broken limb, or were sick of a dangerous distemper, you would know what it was to look out for help. Now let conscience speak; when did you come to Christ, what request did you ever make to him with a true knowledge of your case, with earnestness of desire, and from the bottom of your heart, for his blessed relief, his work, life, and power in you? It was a great word he said, pointing to the ground, *I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*, Luke iii. 8. This seems to us hard work, even for almighty power; but nevertheless must be done in every one of us; and never is done, till we believe it, long to experience it in ourselves, and come to Christ for it. If we have no such thought or purpose in coming to him, what do we come to him, what do we believe in him for? And what better are we for him, if he leaves us just what he finds us, as unbelieving, as fear-
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less of sin, and as much under the power of it, as careless of our souls, as little turned to God, as worldly and unholy as ever? St. Peter says, *unto whom coming as unto a living stone, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house*; directing us to come to Christ for this end. And the plain meaning is, that without him, and till we are taken into him, as stones are fitted into a building, we are dead to all true knowledge and love of God, all life in him, or hope from him. And would to God, you knew how dead, how perishing in sin, how unable to deal with it, or answer for it to God, and how you are hastening to the grave under a sentence of eternal death, that you might turn to Christ, and fly to him for refuge in the peril of your souls.

You put no value upon what is here brought to your remembrance, and set before you, as your hope, that in Christ only we have life; perhaps you may think it strange that St. Peter should talk of *living stones*. Why, my brethren, he knew very well what he said, the words were given him by the Holy Ghost, and he hereby in the strongest manner puts us in mind of our naturally dead state, and of Christ's power to raise us from it. You may slight the
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privilege of being a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, your praises and thanksgivings, together with the obedience of a free heart, and of drawing nigh to God, with a full persuasion that your persons, and your prayers are acceptable to him by Jesus Christ; but it is his work and office in you, the life you receive from him, the fruit he bears in you; and if you do not look for this at his hands, he is ready to say to you, what John Baptist did to the Scribes and Pharisees, who came to his baptism full of themselves, and feeling no want, *O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* Why do you pretend to come to me, without any warning from your own hearts, when you neither know what you are, nor what I am, and will receive nothing from me?

Know then, that *his name is Jesus, to save his people from their sins*; to give them repentance, to wash them in his blood, to clothe them with his righteousness, to be their life, to bring them to the throne of grace, as devout and holy worshippers; and that all *who come unto God by him*, must come to him, as the blind, the lame, the lepers did when he was upon earth, for his

his spiritual benefits, as they did for the cure of their bodily distempers. When he asked the blind man, *what wilt thou that I should do unto thee?* he knew what he wanted, and answered at once, *Lord, that I may receive my sight.* Mark x. 57. For this end chiefly he wrought his miracles of healing, that we might believe and trust in him for help in our own case. And he has not lost his power and compassionate heart, but is now present at this time and place, and still stands over us with these words in his mouth, *be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* If thou feelest the plague of an evil nature, and sin is thy disease, and wouldst fain have the burden of it removed from thy conscience; and the power of it from thy heart, he came into the world with this offer, and cannot deceive thee; *it shall be done unto thee even as thou wilt.* And if sin is better to thee than mercy, or if thou settest an unreasonable value on thyself, and thy own works, and in the main wilt be beholden for life to none but thyself, still he says, *be it unto thee even as thou wilt;* take thy own way, keep thyself from me, and make thy peace with God as well as thou canst. To all such, whether bold sinners, or self-righteous, he can be nothing.

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They will not come to him for life, and he has nothing else to give. He will bear our sins, and heal our infirmities, and fix us in a state of willing subjection to God; he will teach us to be thankful for mercy, and to pray for strength to keep mercy, and be our Mediator and Advocate with God for the acceptance of our sacrifices, and a supply of all spiritual blessings; this he will do for us, this he promises to those who come to him, and so he works in all that are saved by him. But if you desire and expect no such help from him, if you chuse to lie dead in sin, or trust in yourselves, more than you do in him; if forgiveness through him, and conversion by him, is not your business with him,—what shall I say to you? must I speak it? yes; and I pray God speak it where I cannot; he is disallowed and rejected of you. In a word, he cannot be mocked with a bare profession, and outward appearance. His coming is to the heart, that it may come to him, to be built up a lively stone in his spiritual house; to offer *Him* up first as a sacrifice for sin, and then *itself*, a spiritual sacrifice, well pleasing to God by him.

Let me now advise and exhort you to bring this matter of your coming to Christ under examination. Do you know, do
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you consider what we come unto him for, and what it is to be saved by him? Surely you would if you belonged to him. He would be the pearl of great price with you, and his salvation your treasure, and the joy of your lives. You would not content yourselves with a confused, barren knowledge of him, which lets you sleep on quietly in your sins, and never brings you to him in distress of conscience for his forgiveness, nor roots one vice out of your natures. You would not then talk of your good hearts, and good meanings; you would not make your civil, quiet lives, if they were much better than they are, a pretence for standing off from Christ. If you truly believed that he died for your sins, you would see a curse in them which you never could have thought of, and be glad to have that load taken off your backs. Come, my brethren, it must be so; do not mistake all, be not deceived all your lives. Christ never saves a soul, without first opening its eyes to see sin, and condemnation for it. Then it can see the necessity of his blood-shedding, and be very thankful for it; then it can study to please him, and have a will to live to him, and hear him saying, *if ye love me, keep my commandments*. John xiv. 15. Give

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yourselves,

yourself no rest, till you know such a work as this; and let me advise you by no means to think well of your state till you do; for then you will never come to Christ, to know a passing from death unto life. You will have nothing to ask of him, nothing for him to do; no desire to be partakers of his life, no spiritual sacrifices to offer unto God by him, but go to your graves with all your sins upon your heads, and die as much unbelievers, as if you had never heard of the precious name, Jesus. Let me speak a word more. What is it you trust in for salvation; upon what do you venture your everlasting hopes? Is it your baptism and Christian name; coming to church on Sundays, though not regularly and constantly; and now and then, once in one, two, or three years, receiving the Sacrament, and some of you that hear me never? Alas! this is but a poor form, and if Christ was working at the root of it, you would do a great deal more; you would keep your Sabbaths as unto the Lord, you would come rejoicing to the Sacrament as often as you had opportunity, you would pray in and with your families, you would offer up your own sacrifice of prayer, and your hearts with it, to God in private, you would have a Christian appearance in all respects.

respects. But if your outward walk was never so faultless in the eye of the world, it can be no ground of your peace, till you have been seeking after Christ, from a sense of your undone state, as the *Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*; resolve to know nothing for salvation but him crucified, praise God for him, and live as becometh his disciples. If you have feared God from your youth up, lived in no known sin, and kept a strict watch upon your heart, always believing in Christ as your Redeemer, and crucified for you, as well as for the greatest of sinners, renouncing the merit of your own works, and trusting only in him for your acceptance with God, I do not say, you are not come to him; but this is a very rare case; and I beseech you to consider whether it is yours, and whether you can say as you will answer it to God, that you have been mindful of your vow in baptism ever since you could discern between good and evil.

On the contrary, have you been fearless of sin, and more especially blind to your own? Do you not make a conscience of examining your hearts and lives by the strait rule of God's commandments? Did you never see the extreme guilt of sin, God's

hatred of it, and will to punish it, in the glass of Christ's sufferings? Did you never put the great question to yourselves with any degree of seriousness and concern, *what must I do to be saved*; am I in Christ or not? but take it for granted that all is well with you because you are called Christians, though you are ignorant of your condition in sin, ignorant of God, ignorant of Christ, and never saw yourselves perishing without him? Have you not to this day made him your hope, your confidence of rejoicing, your peace; knowing that there is no other way or means of reconciliation for sinful man with a just and holy God; and whatever you do, always humbled under a sense of your manifold defects, and in your very best estate, keeping close to him for pardon, and salvation? Oh! see your danger; call upon God to take the vail from your hearts; all is wrong with you; repent and come to Christ. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you in all the riches of his grace. If your unbelief does not keep you from him, your sins need not. He knows what they are, what we are in them, and that of ourselves we cannot wipe so much as one of them out of his book; and he would have us know it too, that we

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may gladly receive the Saviour he has provided for us. Hear St. Peter telling you once more what you will find in him and what he will make you : *to whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*

S E R M O N VII.

I PET. II. 6, 7. 8.

Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

THE five first verses of this chapter have already been opened; in which St. Peter exhorts those to whom he writes, and in them all Christians to the end of the world, to walk worthy of their holy profession; by *laying aside all malice and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking.* Outward, gross sin of every kind

kind they must avoid ; and if they had not, they would not have been reputed Christians at that time.

But he requires still more ; even the purification of the heart from those inward sins, which no eye of man sees, these here mentioned and all others ; it being the only test of our sincerity with God, to set him always before us, as the Lord who trieth the reins and the heart ; and to be more concerned to approve ourselves to him who seeth in secret, than if the eyes of all the world were upon us. And to enforce his exhortation he puts them and us in mind of an argument or reason for our compliance with it, which no one who knows what it is to be a Christian, and what obligations he has to Christ can well resist ; *if so be*, says he, *ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious*, i. e. the Lord Jesus Christ in taking our flesh, in the labours of his life, and the sufferings of his death, that he might redeem us from the curse of sin, and eternal misery. The exceeding riches of his grace, and the love which moved him to become our Saviour, no words can express, nor heart of man think worthily of. But we must be utterly dead to all sense of it, and whatever we pretend, can have no real belief, or taste,

or feeling of it in our souls, if it does not constrain us to answer the end of it, by living unto him that died for us; purposing and endeavouring, as God shall enable us, to purge ourselves *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, and to be an holy people to the Lord, in the truth and purity of an inward righteousness. If this foundation is laid in us, and we have been taught by the Spirit to cry *Abba Father*, and rejoice in our adoption, we can, we shall be the children and servants of God in the newness of a free obedience. If we have come to Christ in repentance for the remission of our sins; seeing in his death what sin is, how odious and abominable in the sight of God, and how much it cost him to deliver us from it; we shall dread above all things to come again under the curse of it, and look to him in faith for that other great blessing of the New Covenant, the grace of holiness, as well as the grace of forgiveness. So, St. Peter says, acquainting us in the next words, what Christ will be to us, and what we are to propose to ourselves as one end of our coming to him, *viz. as unto a living stone, that we also, as lively stones* (it is a wonderfully striking expression of our dead state, and of his power in raising us from it) *may be built up a spiritual house,*
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an holy priesthood (perfectly holy in him; and though not spotless enough in ourselves, for the office of being priests unto God, yet pressing on to it with the utmost sincerity of intention) *to offer up spiritual sacrifices* (not the blood of beasts as the Jews did, but the blood of Christ; and together with it our thanksgivings for the mercy we have received, our prayers that all grace may abound unto us, our wills, our souls and bodies, our best and purest obedience) *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. He came first to us in great humility, and with bowels of melting pity, to seek and to save us, to bear our sins in his own body, and redeem us to God by his blood; and we have this day professed our belief that he will come to be our Judge. The Lord grant we may so improve his first coming, as to meet him with joy at his second; and *blessed are they who shall not be offended in him*. For elect, and precious as he is, he was a *stone of stumbling and a rock of offence* to the Jews; and he still is so at all times and in all places, to those who either reject him in unbelief, or pretending to receive him as the Christ the Son of God, do not comply with his method of salvation. Alas! much the greatest part of those who are called Christians neither

ther understand what it is, nor give themselves any manner of concern about this kind of knowledge; and then how can they live according to it, or come unto God by him? To prevent this, if it pleases God, that you should hear me, I shall endeavour, with his help, to improve the words of the text,

I. By shewing how precious Christ is.

II. What it is to stumble at him, and why so many do. Lord Jesus, raise up thy power and come among us, and with great might succour us. Send down the holy Spirit of grace to prepare the hearts of all here present, to receive thee as the way, the truth and the life; that in thee we may find rest for our souls, live in hope, die in peace, and be owned by thee at the last day as children, and heirs of thy kingdom!

I. I am to shew that Christ is precious. The apostle says, *elect and precious*: elect, as chosen and appointed of God for the office of our redemption; precious in the eyes of God, because he would undertake it—precious in himself, as the only begotten and eternal Son of God, equal in glory and majesty

jeſty with the Father, and therefore every way qualified for the work he had to do—precious to us, as the atonement for our ſins—the Lord our righteouſneſs—the expounder of the law to us—the reſtorer of our natures to holineſs—our reſurrection and life—our Mediator and Advocate with God.

A ſhort word upon each of theſe may be ſufficient to give you a view of the preciousneſs of Chriſt in the glory of his perſon, in the riches of his love, and the exceeding great value of his bleſſings. I pray God you may attend to what is ſpoken, and accompany it with your own prayers for the ſealing of it to your hearts.

The Lord Jeſus Chriſt is precious in himſelf, and conſidered in the glory of his God-head as the Second Perſon in the bleſſed Trinity, the only begotten of the Father, and laying from all eternity in his boſom. And you ſee at once, in this point of knowledge and belief, how well he deſerves the name of *chief corner-ſtone*, to give ſtrength and ſecurity to his ſpiritual houſe, and what a ſolid foundation we have in his nature of God, to reſt our hopes upon. When the multitude of our ſins riſes up before the eye of conſcience in ſore conviction,

tion, and we are sinking under the burden of them, it is not a little matter that will support us. If we were to be told that a man like ourselves, or an angel of the highest order, had undertaken to reconcile us to God, our fears would still prevail, and we should have been ready to say, how can this be? How can any man make agreement to God for his brother? Or how could an angel, whose whole obedience in every point of his existence is due to God on his own account, obey for his fellow-creatures, and bear the weight of their sin?

When it was all laid upon Christ, in the day of God's fierce anger, it was a heavy load, dreadful indeed, almost insupportable to his spotless soul, and forced that astonishing cry from him—*my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Matt. xxvii. 46. And if it was so severe a trial to him, how could any other in earth or heaven stand under the burden of it? But as he alone could, so he alone could take away the guilt of it; and that because he was God as well as man. I say in this knowledge of Christ, as very God of very God, God in our nature, born into it that he might redeem it from the curse it was under, we have a precious
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antidote against all our fears. Every thing he did was both the purpose of God and the act of God, for us; and therefore we may be sure fully sufficient to answer the end for which it was done; to take away the sin of the world, yours and mine, and to discharge us for ever from that debt. And to God the Father he was precious, because he *would* do it. For when he was baptized of John, and thereby entered solemnly upon his office, God declared his acceptance of him to it, and approbation of him for it, by a voice from heaven, saying, *this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matt. iii. 17. And again it is said, *—therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life*; as if he had not loved him till then, or upon that account more than ever. The words are a marvellous opening to us of the extreme danger of our condition in sin, of God's love in rescuing us from it, and of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ in carrying the Father's love and his own for perishing sinners into execution. Let it be a call to you to attend carefully to what follows; and as he is thus precious in himself, and in the eyes of God, chosen of God for the great work of our deliverance, willing to undertake it, and alone able to accomplish it,

it, consider how precious he is, and ought to be to us,

As the atonement for our sins, and the Lord our righteousness. He died, he lived, he obeyed, he suffered, for us; and when the soul is awakened to see it's nakedness in sin, trembles for it's guilt, and asks the question, *wherewith shall I come before the most high God*, what hope can there be for such a sinner as I am? The answer of faith is, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.* Acts xvi. 31. Believe that he was appointed of God, and willingly offered himself to wash away thy sins in his blood; believe that he came into the world for this very purpose, that he might do the will of God, and fulfil all righteousness for thee, for thy discharge from the condemnation of sin, and acceptance to his favour, for thy present comfort and eternal justification, and upon the warrant of all Scripture thou mayest have the answer of a good conscience towards God, and speak peace to thy troubled thoughts. It is not in thy repentance, it is not in thy after obedience, or very best works; they cannot help thee to this answer, nor give ease to a mind labouring under the apprehensions of God's displeasure. Mark well what I say, and
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what foundation we must be upon for life. We must repent ; but that is not our healing. We must do works meet for repentance ; but that is not the ground of assurance. We are under a sentence of death by the sin of our first parents ; who shall reverse it ? We have pulled death upon our heads, every day and hour of our lives, by our own actual transgressions ; what shall blot them out of God's book ? His eternal truth demands our punishment, his almighty justice is armed against us ; what shall stay his hand, or make him change his nature ? If we were left to estimate the guilt of sin, and try it in our own balance, we should make a light matter of it, and be very favourable to ourselves. We should never have thought what a desperate evil sin is, and what a curse cleaves to it, if the Scripture had not told us. We should never have known, that the just desert of every single sin is death, if we were not well assured that it was so punished in the person of the first offender, and has slain, and will slay all the countless millions which were in his loins. We should have supposed that nothing was more easy than to make our peace with God, in case of transgression, by a slight repentance, a lame obedience

obedience for the time to come, if Christ had not come down from heaven to sustain the whole weight of divine vengeance against it upon the cross. Blessed be God, he did. *He who knew no sin was made sin for us, i. e. treated by God as having all the sin of the world in his own person, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. Sin must have death, even death eternal; and we were bound over to it by innumerable offences. God must have the righteousness of a full obedience from us, and our own imperfect works are not that righteousness, but infinitely short of it; and we must have suffered the dreadful effects of his justice for ever, if he himself had not contrived the means of our deliverance; Christ, and he only, as I am telling you. Not we ourselves, nothing that we have done, or can do, nothing of our own. We must let that alone for ever; and if we were the greatest saints that ever lived, can have nothing but a false, deceitful peace, till we embrace the glad tidings of the Gospel, peace with God through Jesus Christ, and believe in him as the atonement for our sins, and the Lord our righteousness. If there is any thing farther, proper to be observed upon this head, it is, that he offers himself
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in both these respects to be the Saviour of all, even the greatest of sinners; and would to God they would take notice of it for themselves. The best can be saved only by Christ; and the worst may, if they come in upon his call, to receive the gift of forgiveness and righteousness at his hands. It is hard to say, whether we diminish the glory of Christ, and disparage his salvation more, by thinking that any can be saved without him, or that he cannot save all who come unto God by him.

Let us consider farther, that Christ is also precious to us, *as the expounder of the law of God*. He has done it more especially for these two reasons, to shew us first that all are transgressors of the law, when it is rightly understood; and then to bring all to him for deliverance from the penalty of it. He hath discovered to us, in the example of the Pharisees, who were not the least strict sort of men, Matt. v. what a poor thing it is in our eyes, and what sad work we make of it when left to ourselves. If we can but fashion our lives to some kind of outward conformity to it, and justify ourselves to men, we think we have done enough and look no farther. The law says, *thou shalt not commit adultery*; and if we abstain from

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the outward act, we plead obedience, and bid defiance to it. No, says Christ; this is not the interpretation and full meaning of the law. The heart must be brought to account; and if you stop short of it, you try yourselves by a false rule; *for whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart*, and is therefore guilty before God. So, in man's judgment, nothing but profane swearing, or for-swearing, is a breach of the *third* commandment; nothing but downright murder a violation of the *sixth*. Whereas the intention and true spiritual interpretation of the one, is to teach and command us to keep up a continual regard to the presence of God, and to entertain such a profound reverence of him in our inmost thoughts, as would effectually restrain us from all profanation of his sacred name in our words and speech; and of the other, to guard us against those evil motions and risings of the heart, which are contrary to the love we owe to one another, and have the guilt of hatred, *i. e.* murder in the sight of God. And with this rule in our hands, we can go to the full extent of every other command, and are sufficiently instructed where, and how to apply it. Do this faithfully,

fully, and the result of it will inevitably be conviction of sin, and the fastening of such a charge of it upon you as you can no way avoid.

I am not here supposing that you are such a wretched trifler with the commands of God, as to live in the open wilful breach of any of them, or to think that you can acquit yourselves to him by keeping only some of them, or even all but one. The case of such is evidently bad; and must be so more or less to their own consciences, whatever pains they may take to harden themselves against the fear of God. But what I am saying is this; if you think you have an equal, sincere regard to the whole law, in every point of duty as therein prescribed, be sure that you are not mistaken. Have you seen and considered that it has an inward as well as outward part; and that the inward is the more sacred of the two, as being your only security for a constant regular observation of the outward? Have you taken Christ for the expounder of it, and gone with him into the depth of your hearts? This is hard work; but in a matter where the soul is concerned it must be submitted to. If you would have any thing to do with him, you must suffer him to tell

you what sin is, and to search every corner of the heart for it. And when you do, he has a piercing eye, and will bring sins to light which now are hidden from you. He will tear off all your disguises, all your decent coverings of a goodly outside, and lay you as naked and open to yourselves as you are to him. He will make you more vile and loathsome in your own eyes than ever you were proud and conceited; and never leave you till he has made you cry out, unclean, unclean, sinful dust and ashes. You would willingly excuse him from this part of his work; but if ever he takes you in hand he will make you know the necessity of it, and how precious he is in it. If he opens your wounds and makes them smart, it is that he may pour his oil and wine into them, and because he cannot do it, till he has opened and searched them to the bottom. Nay, whatever you pretend, you never came to him for his relief, if you never saw yourselves guilty of the breach of the law, I might say, the whole and every part of it, as he will teach you to understand it. Let him do this for you, let him sit in judgment upon your hearts as well as your lives, and shew you what passes in those secret chambers, and you will be glad to find

find him there as a Saviour too, taking your guilt and punishment upon himself. You will then throw away the rotten prop of your works, which are now, though falsely, your boast and pride, to the loss of Christ; and never talk more of salvation by them, when you know of a truth that you have not so much as one, which you can approve to God as perfectly pure, and clean from all spot of sin. And when Christ has thus made *the law our school-master to bring us to himself*, as our refuge from the sentence of it, and only hope, he will make use of it in another respect, and shew it to us, as the rule of our hearts, and the way in which we must walk with him. He does not intend that we should live in sin, because he has delivered us from it. He came in great mercy to save us from the present burden and everlasting misery of it, because we had neither the will, nor the power to help ourselves; but having done this; and reconciled us to God by himself, he must now come unto us as a refiner's fire, and will call loudly to us to put ourselves into his hands for the work of inward purification. I told you that it is another, and very precious part of his office,

To be the restorer of our natures to holiness.

What could have been done more to my vineyard, said God to the Jews, *that I have not done in it?* Isa. v. 4. Well may Christ say, what could I have done more for the miserable sons and daughters of Adam, dead in trespasses and sins, and under a sentence of eternal condemnation, than to be made in their likeness, that I might shed every drop of my blood to redeem them from death and hell, and purchase for them a right to heaven? And why then will they not suffer me to do for them all that is in my heart, and make them a holy people? Why will they deny me in this, when it is for their own great happiness? What would you think of that man, who was ungrateful to the person who had saved his life, or raised him from the lowest degree of poverty and wretchedness to a state of great plenty, shewed an utter disregard to him in all his behaviour, and stubbornly refused to do any thing at his bidding? The admonition to you is short—you owe your souls to Christ. But I must speak a word more to what you call your good hearts, and open this point a little farther. *If ye love me, says he, keep my commandments.* Oh! that love! what can equal it, who can raise his thoughts

thoughts to the height of it? Do you pretend to know something of it, to believe it, and enjoy the benefit of it, and can you think this, or any other return too much for it? I say where are the good hearts you talk of, and what words can be found to express the baseness of such ingratitude to such a benefactor? The very truth is, you do not believe it; you do not know what you want him for, and what he has done for you, and therefore it is a matter of no consequence with you, whether you study to please him or not. For a true faith will have quite different workings, and the man who can look up to Christ as the Redeemer of his soul, will be always saying to him as Paul did, when he struck him to the earth with a light from Heaven, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. He finds such a reason for obedience in his death, and the love there was in it, as nothing else can afford him; and the forgiveness of his many offences against the law, now opened to his heart in the whole length and breadth of it, brings him to look upon it with another eye than he has done, and with all possible advantage for performance. He knows his crucified Lord requires it of him, and will never own him, if he is not renewed to the

desire and love of holiness. He knows he was crucified for this very end, to deliver him from the just sentence and curse of the law; and in the hope of this deliverance, he will be careful above all things not to resume the guilt of all his transgressions by living in any kind of wilful disobedience to it. Nay, he would not now sin against it, if he might; his will has received a new bent; his heart is changed within him; and if there is one thing which grieves him more than another, it is that he does not perfectly fulfil it in every thought, word, and deed. So Christ does, and must restore our natures, if we belong to him. He calls us to the holiness of a pure obedience, and strictly requires it of us; and the believer has both a new, and very prevailing reason in his love to hear his call to it, and a new will in himself to be possessed of it, as a very precious and necessary part of his salvation. But still though the Lord Jesus Christ calls us to holiness, and so positively commands it, as one great end of his coming; though he promises to reward us for it, far beyond what we can deserve, and will disdain and reject us for ever in the want of it; though there is such a mighty force in his love to move us to it; though

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we cannot come to him at all, but in repentance and sorrow for sin, and with a will to forsake it, and his death upon the cross shews us such a depth of malignity in sin, as we could never have imagined: I say, though all this twisted together makes a very strong cord to draw and bind us to the obedience of God, and of Christ; yet such is the untowardness of our natures, that we still want some more powerful help to subdue it, to bend our stubborn wills, to quicken our dead hearts, and keep us in the way of holiness. And therefore Christ, whose goodness towards us it is, *to put his laws into our mind, and write them in our hearts*, as well as bear our sins, has purchased for us the gift of the Holy Ghost, to teach, and rule in our hearts; to enlighten our minds with saving knowledge, to renew our wills and affections, to strengthen our faith, hope, and charity, to support and comfort us, and be our guide unto death.

And by the same Spirit *he is also our resurrection and life*; his members being risen together and quickened in him; he in them, and they in him, dying and rising again, *and sitting together in heavenly places*, where they now are in virtue of his right and title, and
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whither they must follow him in their own persons at the time appointed.

These, strange as they may seem, are the expressions of Scripture as well as what follows : *for if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, says St. Paul, dwell in you—as he must if you are Christians—he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you :—if he now taketh possession of you whilst you live, he will lie down with you in your graves, and bring you out of them as he did Christ. So he hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel.* 2 Tim. i. 10. Not that it was a thing altogether unknown and unthought of before ; not only that he hath more fully declared the doctrine of a future state, and cast a new light upon it, as indeed he hath ; but by a clear revelation of the manner of it, in his own person actually accomplishing a resurrection unto life for all that belong to him, and putting into their hands a certain pledge of their own resurrection. And for this reason I suppose it is, that so particular a stress is laid in Scripture upon the resurrection of Christ, as a distinguishing and most important article of our belief, and what the Apostles were peculiarly ordained

ordained to bear witness to: all that we believe of Jesus as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, all our trust and hope in him, being contained in and confirmed by it. Happy are they who accounting Christ precious in this respect, as having conquered and abolished death, for them and in them, fear it not, but rather rejoice in the prospect of it, as their dismissal from the pains, sorrows, and sins of this mortal life, and entrance upon an endless state of glory.

Lastly, and to crown all his designs for the good of mankind, *he is our Mediator and Advocate with God*; continually offering up his blood on our behalf; carrying on the interests, and pleading the cause of every single soul which cometh unto God by him, with the same zeal, tender concern, and bowels of love, that he died for us; pitying our infirmities, presenting our prayers and services before the mercy-seat in heaven, sending down the holy Spirit, and deriving grace, and all manner of blessings upon his church and people. We may therefore *come boldly to the throne of grace*, with our spiritual sacrifices, in full assurance of their being acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Oh! let us come *humbly* too,

too, and trusting only in him, knowing that we are all pardoned rebels; and though a holy priesthood in him, as St. Peter tells us, yet of ourselves utterly unworthy to draw nigh to God, and in our best estate having no hope of a favourable reception but in his name and powerful intercession.

On these and other accounts Christ is precious to them that believe. His exposition of the law, and searching operations, have been duly attended to, and had a saving effect upon them. His atoning blood, his perfect righteousness, his resurrection and mediation, the power of his Godhead, the labours and sufferings of his manhood, his life and death, all is theirs. They receive and rejoice in these articles of their belief, as the glad tidings of the Gospel, and the peculiar blessings of the New Covenant; esteeming holiness to be one of them, what Christ had ever in his eye, bound upon all his disciples by his repeated solemn commands, urged them to by the sacred motive of his love, and what therefore, in the sense of that love, they find themselves powerfully engaged to.

But of this there is a sad counterpart mentioned in the text. For precious as Christ is in himself, and in the glory of his salvation,

salvation, and however chosen and approved of God, he was disallowed of men, much the greatest part of his own people the Jews; and to very many even of those who are called by his name, he still is *a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence*: Which I shall proceed to give you some account of.

P A R T II.

II. I am to shew what it is to stumble at Christ, and why so many do.

To stumble at Christ is not only to reject him in downright unbelief, and cry out *crucify him, crucify him*, as the Jews did; but also disowning him in the way of his salvation, mistaking the end and design of it, setting up our own reason, or which is much the same, our own wills against it, preferring our lusts and worldly interest to it, living in great ignorance of it, and in the main being unconcerned about it. And this, in those who are baptized in his name, and call him their Saviour, is too much like what Judas did, saying, *hail master*, and betraying him with a kiss. Matt. xxvi. 49. The general ignorance of Christ, and of the greatness and necessity of his salvation, is lamentable;

lamentable; and your esteem of it, and attention to it, must of course be as little as your knowledge: I mean of those great points on which our salvation chiefly turns; and which are indeed so few, that none need be ignorant of them. None of you would, if the heart and the will were not more concerned in this kind of knowledge than the head. If it concerned this world, or your bodies, you would soon know a great deal more than you are now required to do for your souls. If the Scripture taught an infallible way of thriving and growing rich, you would take it oftner into your hands, and St. Peter's exhortation *to desire the sincere milk of the word*, as new born babes do the breast, would have some weight with you. Believe it, brethren, Christ saves none without making them know what he is, and how great need they have of him, and stirring them up to seek after him with a diligence and concern in some measure answerable to his worth and their interest in him. He says it plainly himself; *He that receiveth the seed into good ground, is he that beareth the word and understandeth it, and beareth fruit.* Matt. xiii. 23.; and how it should bear fruit without being heard and understood is not to be conceived.

conceived. Do you ask what he is? Your God and Saviour. Would you know what you want him for and what he saves you from? From the present curse and eternal damnation of sin. He was born, as on this day, to remove the guilt of it from our souls, and the power of it from our hearts. He took our nature, that in it he might make satisfaction to the divine justice for our sins, bear the punishment of them in his own person, and take them out of God's sight, never more to rise up in judgment against us. He came into the world to be our atonement and righteousness, to deliver us from death and hell, to rectify our mistaken apprehensions of God and ourselves, set us in the way of life, and purchase heaven for us. You will say, all this is well, and as yet can see no occasion for stumbling at him. But what are you willing to do to come at these benefits? Will you take Christ just as he offers himself, to do for you and in you what he knows to be needful, not refusing any part of his salvation, nor flinching from him in any one particular? Will you pray to him to grant you repentance, will you suffer him to work it in you? Will you let him hold up the law to you in his own meaning, and come close to
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your hearts with it, to shew you your need of repentance? Will you deny yourselves in respect of any worth or goodness of your own, and trust in his atonement and righteousness as the stay of your souls? Will you be his servants in holiness, redeemed from your vain conversation in the world? These are the men for Christ, this is his work and office in us, this is himself; and if you now begin to entertain a different opinion of him, and look coldly upon him, you stumble at him, to your eternal undoing. Alas! very many do; by far the greatest part even of those who pretend to believe in him, and you now see the reason of it. O God, look upon us in mercy, and teach every heart in this congregation to give in a true answer to itself concerning the questions which have been asked. I will speak a word on each of them; and observe to you again that they are but few, may easily be learned and remembered, and will certainly be applied to the saving of your souls, if you desire it.

Repentance is the beginning of salvation; and Christ therefore says, *repent and believe the Gospel*, because there is no other way of coming to a Gospel state of peace with God, but by faith, nor to faith but by repentance.

repentance. If sin is no trouble to us, what have we to do with Christ or any thing else for the pardon of it, and why do we seek to get relief from it? Again, he says, *Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Matt. xi. 28. Rest from what? From a burden we do not feel? You could as soon come to him to be restored to your sight when you know you have the perfect use of it. It is therefore evident of itself, if he had never said, *repent or perish*, that we cannot receive him as a Saviour, without seeing the evil of all sin, as well as the reality of our own, and a will to forsake it. And here many stumble grievously at Christ, and his word. If sin must be given up for him, this is too hard a condition; and the wicked will not forsake his way, though every moment he continues in it he is liable to lose Christ for ever. I speak first of notorious finners, seen and known of all, who live in the open breach of any of the commandments, and whose case is confessedly bad, if the Scripture is true, till they repent. But if you are of the number of those who have a better appearance, and in the main stand fair in the eye of the world, for your honest dealing, civil behaviour, and moral character,

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do not therefore swell with self-conceit, as if you were as clear with God, as you are with man, or yourselves, and need no repentance. You may have no better ground for your confidence than a deceitful comparison of yourselves with other men. But Christ has another rule of judging, and searches deep wherever he comes, and possibly you may stumble at him on this account. You certainly do, if you never came under the fiery trial of his law, and refuse to abide by his exposition of it. This is a greater trial than you imagine; and I fear you are backward to understand me on this head. But if we do not look for sin in ourselves where God does, what can the result be but ignorance of our condition, unmeaning prayers, and a false faith, or a vain pretence of believing in Christ without knowing why? Hear what he himself says; *The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.* Matt. xxi. 31.—i. e. great sinners can many times be struck with a sight of their guilt, cry for mercy, and enter into the kingdom of heaven before those who justify themselves. And why do they justify themselves, but because they have not an eye to look into their hearts, and judge of their state by a rule

rule of their own making? Know therefore that every commandment has a twofold signification, an outward and an inward sense; whatever sin it forbids, at the same time it commands the opposite virtue, and both go to the fulfilling of it. When it says, *thou shalt not make to thyself a graven image*; the right understanding of it is, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God in Spirit, and in truth, with the utmost devotion and reverence, and depending only on him. When it forbids murder, it commands love; or adultery, it commands purity of heart. When it says, *thou shalt not steal*; the meaning further is, thou shalt labour diligently to keep thyself from want, and be ready to give to every one that needeth; and so of all the rest. Indeed, my brethren, till you thus judge yourselves according to Christ, and with his rule in your hands, as interpreted by him, you stumble at him, you disallow him. If you plead freedom from the outward gross act of sin, he will say to you, this is well; but do not stop here, O man, go on; go to the heart; my command reaches thither; and he can never take you up to do you any good, till you submit to him in this important and necessary part of his office, as the expounder of the law, in

its full extent and meaning, and suffer him to tell you what sin is, and what sinners you yourselves are. He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; and faith lays fast hold on that precious saying for life, *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*; and why is it so? Why does every awakened soul fly to him for safety, but because it has an eye given it to see it's secret as well as open sin, and death the penalty of all sin? and therefore receives him in truth and sincerity, and with many thanksgivings to God, as it's only atonement for the guilt that is upon it. Again, *he is the Lord our righteousness*; the righteousness appointed of God for us to trust in, as our full justification, and title to heaven; he fulfilling the law in our stead, and thereby doing that for us, which must of all necessity be done, and we could not do. But if we refuse to take the gift of righteousness at his hands, if we do not account ourselves just before God, only and altogether for his merits; if we trust in ourselves, and in our own works, as much or more than we do in him; what can it be owing to, but measuring ourselves by a false rule, and neither considering how much goes to the making of our works perfect, nor that they can never

ver be accepted of God while they are imperfect? Take notice, I beseech you, how all hangs together, and one thing depends upon another in our salvation by Christ. *By grace we are saved through faith.* Eph. ii. 8. What shews us the necessity of this grace, and of receiving it in repentance by faith? Sin, and death by sin. What discovers sin to us? The law as expounded by Christ, and set home upon our hearts, both in the outward letter and spiritual sense of it. Does God require perfect obedience to it at all times, and must we all have this to plead for ourselves? And where then shall we find it but in the person of Christ, standing in our stead for that obedience and righteousness, which the law absolutely demands on pain of death, and we have not performed? Take one link from this chain, and the whole is broken; reject Christ in any of these particulars, and he can be nothing to you but *a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence.* You will mistake your duty, deny your sin, and set up your own works against him, miserably defective as they are, to the hazard of all your hopes.

Lastly, we must by no means stumble at Christ, as sent of God to restore us to his image in holiness; for this would bewretched-

ly to mistake him, every thing belonging to him and done by him. It is true, the salvation he brings us, was altogether wrought by himself; and if ever we are made partakers of it, we must entirely renounce ourselves in this respect, as utterly unable to accomplish any part of it, receive it as a gift and undeserved mercy, and ascribe the whole glory of it to him. Lost and undone in ourselves, what could we do in this great work of our redemption?—Remove mountains; bid the Sun stand still; raise the dead to life; create a world; and then you may think of making satisfaction to the justice of God for sin, conquering death, rising out of the grave, and forcing your way to heaven by your own works.

“ O Jesus; thou blessed babe born at Bethlehem, thou camest, (as on this day) to do the will of God for us men and for our salvation, because thou alone couldst do it. It was thy might, and thy work, and in this thou hadst no helper. We have only this to ask of thee, that we may be grounded in the faith of thy love, and keep it by living worthy of it.” And surely, my brethren, he has taught us how to do this. We must receive a law at his mouth, and follow him in the way of his holy commandments,

mandments. We must abhor and forsake all sin, to the cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye, because it crucified him; we must see the curse of it in his sufferings; and our obedience to him must be very dear to us, because he who died for us absolutely requires it, and has declared over and over again, in the most peremptory manner, that we cannot belong to him if we will not be governed by him. Does he call us to repentance as the first step in our way to him? What is that but a sense of the evil, and damnableness of sin, with a sincere solemn purpose to renounce it? Is it of so deadly a nature, and so hateful to God, that nothing but his blood could wash out the foul stains of it; and do we believe that there is no possibility of peace with God, but in virtue of his atonement and sacrifice? Are our own works or righteousness so unfit to be offered to God, because of the mixture of sin there is in them, that we must of all necessity have a better righteousness made over to us, for our justification? Are we so vile because of sin that we must not presume to draw nigh to God, but in the name of Christ, and with humble trust in his mediation? And is he our resurrection and life, because we

have so much sin cleaving to us in our very best estate as would have left us for ever under death and condemnation? What then is sin? And how can we think that God will accept us in the will of retaining it, when he will accept nothing from us without Christ, nothing but Christ for us, because of the remainder of sin in our natures; and seeing that we cannot take one step to Christ, without knowing our vileness in sin, and condemnation for it, and resolving to repent of it? Put these things together; and see here again, how the several parts of Christian salvation are linked to one another; repentance to the will of coming to Christ, faith to repentance, and holiness to faith; and then if you mistake him in this great end and design of his coming, to make us a holy people to the Lord, it is wilfully; and your sentence is already written, *Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.* Luke xix. 27.—Let me just take up the expression, *holy to the Lord.* Christian holiness is more than the morality of the world. It is not only a smooth life, or civility of manners. You may call it convenience, worldly prudence, the way to get and keep a reputation, philosophy, and what

what you please ; and many things it will do to make a fair shew in the eye of the world ; but if Christ is not working at the root of it, it is nothing but pride of heart, and horribly defective in the sight of God. In a word, the holiness of the Gospel is the genuine fruit of a renewed, pure heart, offering up itself continually to God in love ; and the dedication of ourselves to him, our souls and bodies, our estates and callings, with a single eye to please him, for the command's sake, for conscience sake, for Christ's sake ; and whatever we do, trusting only in him for our acceptance with God.

And now let St. Peter persuade you, not to be offended at Christ in any respect ; but to take him as he is and offers himself, and as you must if you receive him at all. Here is an excellent reason given, why you should, in these words, *he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.* A sinner, and not confounded ! vile man, a rebel to God in the whole form of his life, and the strong bent of his heart, and not be confounded ! Did not Adam's one sin confound us all, and give us up to death and all the pains and sorrows that lead to it ? And can we escape who have disobeyed God a thousand times
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over, shall we not be confounded? No; there shall not a hair of your head perish. For Christ is therefore precious to them that believe, because they know he is their Redeemer, both from the curse of the first man's sin, and all their own. This, my brethren, is the very hope of the Gospel; and the answer of God to repentance and faith is, *The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die*; 2 Sam. xii. 13. *There is now no condemnation, to them that are in Christ Jesus*, and live as they believe. On the contrary, if you stumble at Christ on any account whatsoever, if you think he comes too close to your hearts, and searches every corner of them too narrowly with his law, for sin; calls you too strictly to repentance, and newness of life; lays you too low in your own eyes, and exalts himself too much in being all in all for salvation to every soul of man; if he is too humbling, too holy, too all-sufficient, too precious a Christ for you; if these are the wretched causes of his being disallowed—as indeed they are whatever else is pretended—then hear what the Lord himself says—*whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken, dashed in pieces as a glass would by being thrown against a stone; but on whomsoever it shall fall,*
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it will grind him to powder; as it will fall thus dreadfully heavy on all the impenitent and unbelieving when he comes to judgment.

But does not the Apostle here say, that those to whom he is a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, *were thereunto appointed*! And does not this seem to imply that it was the will of God they should, and could not do otherwise? No, by no means; it would be dreadful indeed to think that any are so appointed, and as I may say, forced upon their damnation. Observe what he says; *they stumble at the word, being disobedient*. And therefore plainly charges all upon the disobedience, and stubbornness of their own wills; and his meaning is, that they were set and bent upon it by their own evil disposition, and that it would inevitably turn to their destruction; to which all who do so stumble are certainly appointed, *i. e.* to reap the fruit of their own disobedience, according to the fore-mentioned words of our Lord, and which St. Peter seems here to have had in his eye.

The Lord grant we may take warning both from the master and his faithful servant. Oh! be not offended at your God and Saviour, for any thing he requires you
to

to do, or believe. Keep in mind the mercy of this day, lay it up in your hearts, and carry it on to every day of your lives. Think, I say, on the mercy and glory of this day, in which he condescended to be born in our flesh, that in it he might do great things for us. How great the angels knew and told us, when they all rejoiced together for our sakes at his humble birth, and sang, *glory to God in the highest for peace on earth and good will towards men.* Luke ii. 14. By taking our nature he redeemed it from the curse it was fallen into; he sanctified it by his life, he expiated the sin of it by his death; he raised it from the grave, and is now set down in it at the right hand of God. Behold your peace, and who it was that wrought it. We had no hand in it, no thought to contrive it, no will or power to effect it. It was all the act and deed of Christ for us, the purchase of his life and death, and is altogether his free gift to us. Take it, and you may rejoice in the faith and hope of a Christian, that God is a reconciled Father; refuse it, and you are lost for ever. And it is refused, when we either take any share of it to ourselves, or do not improve it to holiness of heart and life. *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and*
6 *their*

their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Heb. viii. 12. Here is one part of God's covenant, or royal grant, to man ruined by sin. The other is, I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest. Ver. 10, 11.

My brethren, so he is a God to us; so we are Christians and his people; so we know the Lord, and in this knowledge of him, all things pertaining to life and godliness. And both parts of this blessed covenant are his glory, his mercy to us, and work in us. He receives us to the grace of forgiveness, that we may know him in his love; and when we do thus know him by a true faith, he enables us to glorify him in the fruits of it, and walk with him as all his children and servants do, in the newness of a pure obedience.

Lord Jesus, take us into thyself; that having tasted how gracious thou art, and being grounded on thee, the rock of our salvation, we may give glory to God; lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies,

fies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, loving one another with a pure heart fervently; as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby; and be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, the service and thanksgiving of our whole lives, acceptable to God by thee our blessed and only Saviour. And, O almighty God, who hast given us thy only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; grant that we being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy holy Spirit, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

S E R-

S E R M O N VIII.

I PET. II. 9.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

S AINT PETER in the foregoing verses having spoken of Christ, from the prophet Isaiah, as a living stone of God's laying, or foundation of life; and how precious he is to believers, though he was disallowed and rejected of men, more especially his own people, the Jews; proceeds in this and the following verse to put them in mind of the high privileges they were invested with, as Christians, what a great and happy change was made in their state, and what cause they had to rejoice in it. *But ye,* notwithstanding his being a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to the disobedient,

dient, *ye*, says he, they to whom he wrote, and all Christians to the end of the world, *are a chosen generation*; as Christ was chosen of God, so are they in him, and beloved of God for his sake: *a royal priesthood*; so St. John says, *he hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father*; Rev. i. 6. *we who were far off are made nigh by his blood*, Eph. ii. 13. have the liberty of approaching God in Christ our head, as being one with him, and may come boldly to the throne of grace, as a royal priesthood; it is a very high thing to be spoken of such sinners as we are, but the poorest beggar, believing in Christ, is entitled to this privilege: *a holy nation*; washed in the blood of Christ from all spot of sin, keeping themselves from the defilement of it, and studying to be like him in holiness: and he says farther, that Christians are *a peculiar people*; what the Jews once were, they are now, Jews and Gentiles in one body God's peculiar people, his right and property, what he esteems his own, and as such distinguished by his favours, and heirs of his blessings. And they were thus separated, he tells them, from the rest of the world, to be *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*, for the ends of
God's

God's glory as well as their own salvation. *As the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work, Ps. xix.*

1. so they were to let their light shine before men, to the praise of the glory of his grace; that others seeing the mighty change which had been wrought upon them, and acknowledging the divine power in it, might be allured by it to come to God for the same change in themselves, that they too might be called out of darkness into his marvellous light. My brethren, hear your call in the words this day. *A chosen generation! a royal priesthood! a holy nation! a peculiar people!* Poor worms of the earth, sinful dust and ashes, what greater can we think of than to have such honour put upon us! When you hear the words, how can you help saying to yourselves, what can be more desirable than to be one of this number? And yet such you will be, when you are called out of darkness into the marvellous light of God and of Christ. I pray God I may be able to help you in the understanding of these expressions, the darkness of unbelievers, the light of Christians; and may the Spirit of the Lord speak them in their full sense and virtue to all our hearts. I

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shall therefore take occasion from these words,

I. To consider what a state of nature is, here called darkness.

II. A state of grace, or light.

I. A state of nature ; that is, what you may suppose that of a man to be, who knows no more of God and religion than his natural reason teaches him, confines all his views to this life, and is ignorant of the state of his soul ; or if he has the Bible in his hands, sets no value upon that kind of learning, makes no use of it, does not concern himself about it, but continues in the main as insensible and regardless of the great truths contained in it as if he had never heard of them. Let such a one be never so wise in the things of this world, good-natured, prudent, civil, with a reputation for honesty and fair dealing, put the matter as high as you will, add some form of religion to all the rest, his condition is here told him, he is in darkness. And that more especially in these respects ; he is ignorant of God—ignorant of sin—ignorant of the way of salvation ; or which is the
same

same thing, whatever knowledge he has of these points, it settles altogether in the head, without reaching his heart, influencing his endeavours, or affecting his practice. The former of these, or downright ignorance, is the case of those who lived before the coming of Christ, or never heard of him; the other, of those who by living in christian countries, and often hearing the peculiar doctrines of Scripture spoken of, cannot be supposed to be totally ignorant of them, but through carelessness, self-conceit, or attachment to the world, that is, upon the whole, unbelief, receive no benefit from them.

1. The natural man is ignorant of God. He neither knows what he is in himself, nor what he is to us, what he requires of us, or will do for us. And for this reason he is said in Scripture to be without God; the God he believes in being one of his own making, to suit his inclinations, and suffer him to go on in his own way. He does not understand that he was made and sent into the world to live in a willing subjection to him, to reverence his authority, and be wholly at his disposal, and therefore does not take him for his Lord and Governor. He may not be openly and notoriously wick-

ed; he may be prudent in the management of his worldly concerns, and so far wise as neither to waste his substance nor destroy the health of his body by any kind of intemperance, nor live so as to hurt his reputation, nor bring needless inconvenience upon himself; but in all this he has no regard to God, nor design to recommend himself to his favour. And as he is without a sense of God's government and authority, so he does not know or consider that his heart is God's due, nor what it is to give it to him. Let what will befall him, good or evil, he is still bowed down to the earth, looks for his happiness nowhere else, and has not the least thought of chusing God for his portion. He may believe that he gives and takes away, and be more or less pleased with him as he receives more or less from him, but he does not consider him as the great object of his love, and entitled to the chief place in his affections. *He that cometh to God, with a right knowledge of him, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* Heb. xi. 6. that is, in truth and earnestness of desire, as their portion in time and eternity. But this is not the temper and character of the natural man. His ignorance of God prevents his

coming to him; and present and sensible things are so much the idols of his heart, and the end of his living, that he cannot seek him at all, and much less with any degree of diligence, as his treasure and exceeding great reward. The almighty power of God is not his trust for support and protection. The universal presence of God, as privy to all his thoughts, words, and actions, and always at hand to supply his wants, is no part of his comfort. The perfections, the will, the law of God he is unacquainted with; his head, his heart, his whole soul, are otherwise employed, and his will bent against them. The Scripture says more, *they are foolishness to him*, and that *he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. ii. 14. that is, by a light which he neither has nor desires. And if there is one thing in God which he chiefly dislikes, or makes less account of than another, and endeavours to keep at the greatest distance from his thoughts, it is his Justice. His Mercy he can acknowledge and speak well of; but then it is the only article of his creed; and if God is any thing else, if he is not only and altogether Mercy, without Truth, without Holiness, without Justice, by his own

confession he is an unknown God to him. In a word, he is ignorant of God as a Being who is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, with entire devotion, and unfeigned desire of his blessings, and who strictly requires it of him. He calls not upon him, he prays not to him, from a sense of his spiritual wants, has nothing to ask of him, keeps up no intercourse with him, respecting his soul; and if ever he uses words to this purpose, it is because they are put into his mouth by others, they cannot be the language of his heart.

2. As the natural man is ignorant of God, so he is likewise ignorant of sin, it's deadly nature, and prevalence in himself, and therefore denies it where it is, excuses it when it cannot be denied, and upon the whole makes a light matter of it. Indeed, ignorance of God, and ignorance of sin go together, and it is hard to say which is first; but certain it is that they mutually strengthen and support each other. We mistake the nature of God because we know not what sin is; and again, our ignorance of sin, and unwillingness to know what it is, keeps us in ignorance of God. He is the hater and avenger of sin. This is the nature and character of the God with whom
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we have to do, of which the sin and punishment of the first man is full proof; and I may venture to affirm that there never was, nor ever will be, a sin in the world unpunished. If you are at a loss to understand me, think of Jesus Christ. If there was a single sin of yours or mine, which he did not take up, and bear in his own body on the cross, it would sink us to hell. And here the natural unenlightened man is all blindness, sees no such evil in sin as is pretended, and laughs at the word, damnation. Though the Scripture from beginning to end is all a history of God's dealings with men on account of sin, of his will to punish it, and the methods he has taken to prevent it; though he feels the truth of it in all the calamities which befall him, in the pains, sicknesses, and sorrows of this mortal life, and knows that he must feel it in the death of his body, he will not understand that there is such a killing power in it, nor that he is under the curse of God for it. And besides his ignorance of the evil quality, and destructive nature of all sin, he is blind to his own, does not perceive what a strength it has in himself, and what a law it is in his members. And the reason is, because he does not trace it up to

it's root, nor suffer the law of God to sit in judgment upon his heart. If he is not one of the worst of men, and for the most part abstains from outward, scandalous sins, he looks no farther, and will not be persuaded that God does. Secret sins, pride, malice, guile, envy, wrath, fretfulness against God and man, and much other filthiness of spirit, are unobserved, or the guilt of them denied under pretence of infirmity, or the unavoidable corruption of nature. Whereas that very nature, as the root of such evil fruits, must necessarily be a great part of every man's sin; and if it is not seen, and confessed, and lamented as such, we shall be for ever hidden from ourselves. And from hence it comes to pass that the natural man sees no sin in not resigning himself to the disposal and authority of God, and living in professed subjection to him as his Lord and Governor; no sin in keeping his heart from God; no sin in not seeking after God; no sin in a continual course of worldliness, to the neglect of his everlasting portion in God; no sin in any thing but what exposes him to present loss, inconvenience, or the censure of the world.

3. And as he is ignorant of God, and of sin, he must of course be ignorant of the way

way of falvation, or averſe to it in his heart. He cannot deſire and ſeek after it, any more than he would for recovery from a bodily diſtemper, when he thinks himſelf in perfect health. The way of falvation, as declared in Scripture, and I know of no other, is by Chriſt's ſatisfaction to juſtice, and faith in him as a ſacrifice for the ſin of the world. And this faith, in every one who flies to it as his remedy, neceſſarily ſuppoſes ſenſe of ſin, of the heinouſneſs of it, and the wrath which is due to it. And again, this ſenſe of ſin, wherever it is real, as of it's being odious in itſelf, contrary to the holineſs, purity, and commands of God, and expoſing us to his diſpleaſure, will of courſe be accompanied with repentance, and a will to forſake it. And laſtly, this work of conviction, repentance, and faith, will infallibly carry him on in the way of Chriſt's falvation, and beget in him an earneſt, ſincere purpoſe to be made partaker of his holineſs, with a reſolution to put himſelf into the Spirit's hands for newneſs of heart and life. But what a myſtery muſt all this be to the natural man? who denies his ſin, or never ſearches his heart for it; ſees little or no evil in it, and therefore no neceſſity of repentance; does not think he
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wants any such atonement for it as the blood of Christ, and is entirely ignorant both of himself, and of all the perfections of God; even of that mercy on which he builds his hopes, and is the only thing he thinks of in God, or rather makes a pretence of it for not thinking of him at all, or having any dealings with him in the depth of his soul. For mercy is compassion shewed to the guilty, or remission of a debt. But where there is no debt, nor acknowledgement of guilt, mercy has nothing to do. It cannot be understood, nor believed, and the offer of it will be slighted; just as you would scorn any man, who should pretend kindness in forgiving a debt which you never owed him, or saving life when you had done nothing to forfeit it.

Such is the state of every natural man; a state of horrible and gross darkness, if ignorance of God, of himself, of sin, and salvation from it, can make him so. And under this image the Scripture frequently represents it, to bring the matter home to our senses, and convince us of the extreme danger and misery of our condition in ignorance or unbelief. What a traveller would be in the darkest night, and in an unknown road, beset with robbers, and full of deep
3 pits,

pits, such is the condition of the soul travelling to another world, and boldly venturing on in spite of danger, without one star to guide it. What the earth would be without the light of the sun, dark, barren, and uninhabitable, that every one is, in respect of eternity, without the light of heaven shining upon his soul. But perhaps you will say, surely there are none such among Christians, who are baptized into Christ, worship God in his name, profess their belief in him as often as they meet together, and hope for salvation by him. What, are there no open sinners, none walking contrary to the Gospel, no careless ones, no unbelievers among us? Do all attend strictly to the one thing needful, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure? Are all Christians in knowledge and practice as well as name, believing in God, trusting in Christ, guided by the Spirit, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life? Bethink yourselves one by one whether it is so or not. I judge no man; neither do I pretend to mark out the exact boundary between light and darkness. But certainly it behoves every man to try himself, how far he is in the one state or the other; and
perhaps

perhaps you will be better able to judge of this matter, and may know something more of yourselves, when I have shewed,

II. What a state of grace, or light is.

It is the knowledge of God, and of ourselves in Jesus Christ, with a conformity of heart and practice thereunto. I say, in Jesus Christ; for without him we know nothing, neither God nor ourselves, neither sin nor deliverance from it, neither our business in the world nor the means of securing our portion in the next. He is the opener of the kingdom of heaven; he hath purchased it for us, and with the light which he brought down from thence we shall come to the everlasting possession of it. Let us but lay him for our foundation, and chief corner stone, and we shall be built up in the knowledge of every thing that can concern us, pass quietly and safely through the world, enjoy life, and welcome death. For he is *the way, the truth, and the life*; John xiv. 6. the way to heaven, the truth of God, and the life of our souls. In him, and him only, we are light in the Lord, in a state of grace, holy and beloved, the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom.

And

And a marvellous light it is to those who are effectually called into it, and receive it into their hearts. It is now presented to you ; and I pray God you may know it according to the Apostle's commendation of it, and say as he did, and all believers can—*God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. 2 Cor. iv. 6.*

When St. Peter opened the kingdom of heaven, God's kingdom of grace, or the Gospel of salvation, to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, he summed up what he had said to them in these words : *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Acts ii. 38.* And again, when he opened the same doctrine of grace to the Gentiles, in the person of Cornelius, he concluded his discourse at that time with saying, *to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him, shall receive remission of sins. Acts x. 43.* Forgiveness of sins therefore was the sum of his preaching upon these two remarkable occasions, and the great point he had to declare. Let us proceed

ceed with this light in our hands, and see how it looks backward and forward, and to what kind of knowledge it will lead us.

Salvation is by the grace of forgiveness. Then we are naturally in a state of guilt, under a sentence of condemnation, and without mercy liable to perish for ever. Behold, it has been shewed us from the Lord, and great cause have we to believe in him as the God and Father of mercies. Again, forgiveness is by Christ, in his name, for his sake, and through his bloodshedding. Then there is a justice in God, terrible to think of, and which could not otherwise be satisfied than by the death of his own Son, bearing our punishment. Then likewise he is a holy God, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot but abhor the disobedient and ungodly. Again, what is sin, and what are we in sin? We see plainly in the death of Christ for it, what a curse it brings us under, that there is a depth of evil in it far beyond what we could ever have imagined, and that God will not suffer it to go unpunished. The wages of it is death, and death it must have. This is God's eternal, unalterable sentence against it; and if no ransom can be found for the forfeited lives of our souls
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but his only begotten Son, he can deliver him up to be a sacrifice of atonement for us, but he cannot make sin to be what it is not, a harmless thing and unworthy of punishment; nor deny himself by acting contrary to his holiness, truth, and justice. So then by looking backward from the cross, we have a clear view of the nature of God, and the nature of sin, and of our condition in sin; we are already in possession of a great deal of valuable truth, and so far come into the light which St. Peter here tells us of.

Now therefore look another way, look forward, and see whether the knowledge we have already gained will not carry us on to other points. In Christ crucified God is manifested, and as it were made visible to us. We see him just, holy, merciful, condemning sin and sparing the sinner; we see sin in all its guilt, and God in all the glory of his love. But we must not stop here. When you see sin thus punished, and God thus incensed against it, can you, will you live in it? Will you provoke God to take back his forgiveness and lay that heavy load of vengeance upon you, which he laid upon Christ? Will you not see what sin is, in his suffering for it? Will you not put the accursed

curled thing from you? Will you not repent? If Christ had not positively said, repent, surely the matter must be evident to your own reason; and when you see God's abhorrence of sin, and indignation against it, in so strong a light, it must needs create abhorrence of it in you, and convince you of the necessity of repentance. But now when you have likewise gained this point of knowledge, and purpose to repent and put your purpose in execution, what will you do? Will you look no farther? Will this set you clear with God? Will your repentance save you? No; your faith, your faith. This is the answer of all Scripture, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.* There is your remedy, faith in Christ taking away the sin of the world, and your sin. You must know, and believe assuredly, that no repentance, nothing that you can do, no will or work of your own, can wash out the foul stains of sin, and remove the curse of it from your soul and body, and that you must have suffered it for ever in your own person, if Christ, by the appointment and will of God, had not taken it upon himself. Here then is another point of knowledge gained, namely, faith; take one step more, and you will come full into the light.

light. If what you know of God, and of sin, as seen in Christ crucified, has brought you to repentance, and your repentance to faith, your faith will bring you to holiness. It will be the earnest desire and wish of your souls to live unto him that died for you, by keeping his commandments. And if his love does not bind you to his service; if it does not constrain you, by a sweet force, to shew your love to him in the very way he requires of you; if you are not willing to obey him and come unto God by him, a willing devoted people, you must not pretend to believe in him.

You will say, must we know and believe all this, to be in a state of grace, that is, of salvation? Yes, undoubtedly; unless you can give a reason why you should chuse to know and do less, or how you can be Christians without the very thing which makes you so, Christian faith and practice. St. Peter says of those to whom he wrote, without any distinction of high or low, learned or unlearned, that they were *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, to shew forth the praises of him who had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light*. Have these words no meaning, or can they possibly be-

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long

long to any who are ignorant, unawakened, and unconverted, and set no value upon the high and holy state signified by them? Is it a marvellous light which teaches nothing, discovers nothing; and can those be said to be called and come out of darkness who love it, and plead for it, and are so infatuated as to think well of their condition tho' they continue in it all their lives? Remember that the Catechism teaches every one to say, *I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation, and I pray unto God to give me his grace to continue in the same unto my life's end.* But how can this be? How can any thank God for calling them to a state of salvation which they know nothing of; or how can they pray to him for grace to continue in it, when they make so little account of it as not to think it worth the understanding? Christ, I told you before, is to the soul what the sun is to the world, and wherever he comes, light comes with him; though not in the same degree to all, yet in such a work to every man as he cannot but be sensible what it is, that he values and desires it, and is in Christ's hands for it. I say again, in answer to all such ignorance, let it proceed from what cause

cause it will, wickedness, or worldliness, sloth, or a proud conceit which will not be taught of God, that it is not a Christian state; and that those who are in a state of grace do and must know what it is, and what they have been seeking after. Their own sin has been discovered to them, together with the guilt and damnableness of all sin; they know that by the just judgment of God they are under a sentence of death, and that none could deliver them from it but Christ; to him therefore they have come sorrowing and repenting; in him they trust for pardon, and acceptance with God; they can find rest for their souls no where but in God's peace through him, know the great mercy of it, and how dearly it was purchased for them, and fear nothing so much as to lose it; and therefore they keep their eyes steadily fixed upon the holiness as well as forgiveness of the Covenant, and have but one great wish for themselves, that they may *grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. Tell me that you are in such a work as this, though it be yet only in a lower degree, and I can tell you for your comfort that you are in a state of salvation, and in Christ's way of life. On the other

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hand,

hand, think, I beseech you, what horrible mockery it is to say to God, "grant that we being regenerate and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy holy Spirit," when you have no knowledge or belief of your undone state by nature, of your danger and misery in sin, and of the necessity of being brought into a new condition with God by forgiveness, and enabled to live to him in holiness: or to say, "you believe in the Holy Ghost the Comforter," when in the bottom of your hearts you desire none of his comforts, chuse to live only to and for the world, and have not the least experience in yourselves of his work of power in *turning you from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that you may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in Christ.* Acts xxvi. 18. My brethren, would you have me tell you that this is being in a state of grace and salvation? I dare not. It is my office to hold up the truth to you; to tell you, as I am able, what God is, what Christ is, what sin is, what a work of the Spirit is; to call, to awaken, to persuade you; to convince you, if it pleases God, of the blindness and certain ruin of a natural,

or unconverted state on the one hand, and of the light, peace, and blessed hope of a state of grace on the other ; but if you will not hear me, I have nothing else to preach or deliver to you, and your blood must be upon your heads.

Let me therefore exhort you from what has been said at this time to look into yourselves, and consider what your state is ; whether it is a state of nature, in the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, or a state of grace, in what the Apostle here calls a marvellous light. Heaven opened to us as our hope and inheritance, and the light of heaven shining in our souls to conduct us to it ; the light of truth and holiness, light in the head, light in the heart ; the Spirit's light to see God, to see Christ, to see ourselves, to see our sin, death in it, and salvation from it : is not this indeed a marvellous light, and a mighty change for poor sinners, lying in darkness and the shadow of death ? You might have some faint conception of it, if you would think of a man who had laid many years in a deep dungeon, and was brought out all at once into full day light. And what else can St. Peter mean, by saying, that Christians are *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,*

a peculiar people? It is not easy to raise our thoughts to the height of these expressions, but you must needs think it a glorious happy thing to be persuaded on good grounds that they belong to us. They do, as sure as we are believers; and if Christ is precious to you, you may go home rejoicing in the comfort of them. I say, think it worth your pains to bring the matter under examination. What do your thoughts run much upon, what is uppermost in your hearts, and the great design you are carrying on in the world; and if you do pray, what is the burden of your prayers? Is it for mercy, and strength to keep it? Is it to hate sin, and love holiness more? Is it to be kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation? Do your wills, do your hearts pray for this? And do you *desire the sincere milk of the word, as new born babes, that ye may grow thereby?* Then you have faith, then you have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, then you are called out of darkness into the marvellous light of Christ. You know him to be the pearl of great price; you see the difference between Christ and sin, between Christ and the world, between Christ and your own works, between life and death, time and
6 eternity,

eternity, and have the grace given you to chuse what God chuses for you. On the other hand, if you know or think little of Christ; if he has not opened your eyes to see sin, and the necessity of his death for it; if he has no right in you, nor power over you, to set you in the way of God's commandments, and keep you to your vow in baptism; if you do not greatly esteem his salvation, and thank God for him, and dread above all things to lose your portion in him; I beseech you, know your state, and pray to God to make you sensible of it. Do not deny it, nor frame excuses for continuing as you are, but make haste and escape for your lives; for notwithstanding your Christian name, and appearance in this place, you are in a state of darkness, without God, without Christ, without faith, and the life of faith; though not without hope, if you will turn to the light which is offered you. And if it pleases God that you should find all is wrong with you, and come before him with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, as you have often said you did, without knowledge or meaning; let me advise you not to think of making your peace with him by any humblings or repentings of your own, without

R 4

Christ,

Christ. For *there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. no way or means for sinful man to be reconciled to God but by faith in Christ, taking away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Repent you must sincerely, and do works meet for repentance; but if you think that nothing else is to be done, or that any thing you can do will atone for your sins, and make satisfaction to the justice of God, you are still unbelievers, and as much out of the way of salvation as ever. It is true, we would fain have it so, from a vain conceit of our own doings, and our low, false notions of the purity of God, the strictness of his law, and the sinfulness of sin; and the only thing which can help us, Christ's blood, is the last we often fly to, and many never. But I have spoken in vain, if you do not understand that no outward form of religion, no beneficence, or exercise of humanity, no kind of behaviour or character, how decent and respectable soever, can be substituted in the room of the one, sole remedy of God's providing, and which is alike wanted by every Son and daughter of Adam. Let all such know that if they do not look for justification by Christ, and make him the foundation of
their

their acceptance with God, he will disdain all their works and services, find sin in the very best things they do, and reject them as they do Christ. Let this then be done; let Jesus be to you what he came into the world for, and his name imports, your Saviour, *made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. 30. doing the will of God, for your salvation, which he alone could do, purchasing your peace, and saving you from the second death by his own sweat and blood: oh! do this, pray for this, turn the eye of your soul this way, look with penitence and faith on him who was pierced by you and for you, that you may love him, and he may live in you; do this, and you will be the children of God's family and kingdom now, *born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*; 1 Pet. i. 23. and hereafter, joint heirs with Christ in his glory.

May that word written by his inspired Apostle, and now brought to your remembrance by me, be sounded into your hearts by the same Spirit which gave it, and stir you up to secure the blessedness of it to yourselves. *Ye*, says he, speaking to all true believers, faithful Christians, and no other,

other, are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.

S E R-

S E R M O N IX.

I PET. II. 10.

Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

IN the ten first verses of this chapter, St. Peter distinctly mentions the faith and practice of Christians, the privileges they enjoy, the hope they are made partakers of, the new and happy state they are called to, by being the people of God. Having *tasted that the Lord is gracious*, being grounded in the faith of his love, and *coming to Christ as unto a living stone*, they also as *lively stones*, are built up a *spiritual house*, a *holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices*, their prayers, their praises, their hearts, their wills, their purest and best obedience, *acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. To them that believe he is precious in all respects, as their atonement and righteousness,

ness, the restorer of their natures to holiness, their resurrection and life, their Mediator and Advocate with God. And in the sense of his blessings, which are dearer to them than all the world, they strike at the root of sin in the heart, by *laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speakings, as new born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby*, study to approve themselves to God as his children in every thought, word, and deed, and endeavour as much as possible to *shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light*. All which the Apostle sums up in the text, which is the conclusion of the first part of his epistle from the beginning to this verse; in which having set before them the blessedness of believers, in such high expressions as they would never have presumed to think of without his warrant and authority, namely, that they were *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people*; he closes the whole with bringing their past and present state into one view; that upon a comparison of one with the other, what they had been and what they were, they might, with him, bless the God and
Father

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the happy change which had been wrought in their condition—for that *in time past they were not a people, but now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now,* says he, *have obtained mercy.* Upon hearing the words, you must needs take notice of the great difference between the two states mentioned in them; how desirable it is on one hand to be of the number of God's people, how dreadful on the other not to obtain mercy. I shall endeavour to recommend them to your careful observation, and assist you in the improvement of them,

I. By shewing the happy condition of the people of God.

II. By what means we attain to this state, and how we may assure ourselves that we are in it.

III. The necessity of our being brought into it.

O Lord, help me, for it is a great thing I am to speak of, thy salvation, thy Christ, thy Spirit, thy kingdom of grace opened in our hearts as the only way to thy kingdom
of

of glory. Have mercy on us, and be our guide unto death. Make thy word the favour of life to every one in this congregation, and bring us before thee with earnest unceasing prayer to *see the felicity of thy chosen, and rejoice in the gladness of thy people.*

I. I am to shew the happy condition of the people of God.

It is implied and expressed in the very word, *people*. As the people of any country are entitled to the privileges of it, enjoy the benefit of it's laws, and think themselves happy under a wise and just government; in like manner, the people of God, as separated from the rest of mankind to a state of professed subjection and obedience to him as their Lord and Governor, are under his immediate care and inspection, owned by him as his people in a manner which others are not, and entitled to his peculiar blessings and favours. It is true, his kingdom ruleth over all, and all in common enjoy the benefits of his providence, and universal dominion; for *he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*
Matt.

Matt v. 45. The air we breathe, the bread we eat, are his gifts to all without distinction ; every creature lives continually upon his bounty, is wholly at his disposal, and supported every moment by his will. And farther, as he made us for the knowledge of himself, he has an eye to this in all his dealings with us, and *would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.* 1 Tim. ii. 4. He now calls you to it, that he may be your God and Father, and you may rejoice in the happy state of his children. But if you despise this mercy, and do not chuse to have your portion in him, here is plain intimation given you that you do not belong to him as his immediate subjects and servants, and therefore have no share in the blessings of his peculiar people. Do you ask what those blessings are ? All that you can suppose a gracious God has in store for those whom he loves and favours. The riches of his grace, the joy of his promises, all manner of blessings exactly suited to their needs, the blessings of time, the blessings of eternity ; deliverance from the worst of all evils, and the greatest of all fears, from the power of sin reigning in them as a nature, and from damnation, the desert of sin ;
peace

peace and good will, perfect reconciliation, and a right to draw nigh to him as children to a Father ; protection, and comfort in life, support in death, and both in life and death *a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Being *born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, by the word of God,* 1 Pet. i. 23. they are begotten to the power of an endless life ; and though they must pay the debt of nature, and die like other men, it is only to be freed for ever from sin, pain, and sorrow, and to enter upon those joys which are prepared for them ; for *their life is hid with Christ in God*, bound up in his life, quickened by the same Spirit which declared him to be the Son of God, and raised him from the dead ; and in virtue of their union with him, *when Christ who is their life shall appear, then shall they also appear with him in glory.* Col. iii. 3, 4. Behold the portion of God's people, and those who have obtained mercy, what they believe in, and come to him for, and are sure to receive at his hands ; though at the same time it must be confessed that this is the very thing which frights the
greatest

greatest part of mankind from him. If his blessings are the comforts of a soul, and the riches he bestows upon his children and favoured people are spiritual, or future, this is a kind of happiness for which the men of the world have no relish, and therefore resolve to seek it in other things. Certain, I say, it is, that the natural unenlightened man, whether vicious, careless, or altogether worldly, neither covets nor knows them; and that they are downright foolishness to him. But nevertheless God reveals them to you, proposes them to your choice, courts you with the offer of them, and would gladly stir you up to desire them for yourselves, because he knows you must be undone for ever in the want of them; and he can make them look as lovely in our eyes, as once they were mean and contemptible. But I beseech you, before we refuse them let us consider a little further what they are. God, we may be sure, will take care of those whom he owns for his people, and provide effectually for their well-being and happiness. And the way to do this, he knows is not to leave them to judge for themselves, what he ought to do, and what is good for them; but he tells them what is so, and puts it in their

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power;

power ; and if they will not chuse what he chuses for them, he cannot depart from his own wisdom, nor be so much their enemy as to alter his purpose. What is necessary for them, and suited to their wants, that he will do, and nothing else. If they are in darkness, he will call them into his marvellous light : if they are in the way of death, he will shew them how to come out of it : if they are deservedly under his curse, he will have mercy on them, and remove it from them ; but cannot suffer them to continue in it without giving them warning of their danger, and offering them his help. See now what God does, and will do for his people ; what they are by putting themselves into his hands, and what you should wish for yourselves if your eyes were opened to discern between good and evil. If you were taken captive by an enemy, bound hand and foot, and without any means of relief in your power, you know what would be deliverance to you in this condition. If you were sick of a deadly distemper, you would wish for a cure ; if you were under a sentence of death for any crime you had committed, you would joyfully accept a pardon. But what is this to the sentence of eternal death we are un-

der, to the natural corruption which holds us in it, to the sin which brings it upon us, cleaves to our souls and bodies, and leads us blindfold into the pit of destruction? And yet such is our unhappy condition, till the mercy of God meets with us; such is the deliverance he works for us, and with all the kindness and compassion of a father for his perishing children invites us to accept of. And if this, in every particular of it, is the state of mankind before they have obtained mercy; if we are all without exception blind, sinful, condemned, and helpless, you must perceive at once that recovery from it is the very thing we want, and the greatest blessing which can be vouchsafed us. Consider these words of Christ—*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* Luke iv. 18, 19. What a melancholy account is this of Satan's kingdom in the world, and of the hard bondage in which he holds the miserable sons of Adam! What a poor slave would be in the dun-

geon of a prison, galled and bruised with the weight of his chains, and without the least glimmering of light, that we are, one and all, in respect of our spiritual condition. Sin hath cast us into prison, loaded us with heavy chains, and covered us with darkness as much as if our eyes were put out; and there we are, bound over to death, till God's time comes for our deliverance, expressed here by *the acceptable year of the Lord*; which is an allusion to the year of jubilee among the Jews, when all debtors and servants by the law of Moses were to be released. You may refuse all your lives to see yourselves in this light; but it is an exact picture of our natural state, if Christ knew what was, and what he came into the world to do. As sure as we are born, we are in sin, blind in sin, and under a sentence of condemnation for sin; and if you ask a proof of this, you may easily find it in yourselves. I beseech you, observe; the most high God acquaints us with his will, spreads his law before us, says positively, this thou shalt do, this thou shalt not do, and we break through all restraints, and venture to disobey him: what is this but sin? And why are we so prone to disobey him, and trample upon his authority

thority, but because we are corrupt in the deep ground of our natures, and have a law in our members warring against the law of God? Take notice again that we are as blind as corrupt; we do not see sin where it is, nor hardly the guilt of any sin. Though the Scripture is as full and clear in the point as possible; though we learn from thence that one sin of the first man brought death into the world, and know by woful experience that every child of man dies for it; though besides the sentence we are under for Adam's sin, we have innumerable transgressions of our own to answer for, and cannot but understand that sin is the same, and God the same now that they were then; yet it is hidden from us as much as ever, and we will not be persuaded of it's deadly nature, God's hatred of it, and will to punish it: What can this be but utter blindness? And if God is just, and true to his word, what can the result be but condemnation? Blessed be God, he can and will release us from it; he does deliver many, and has always a people in the earth. He is now waiting to be gracious to every one of you; and whatever your sin is, present blindness in it or slavery to it, you may obtain mercy from

the Lord, and experience a happy alteration of your condition. And a great deliverance, and a happy change you must needs think it, to have your eyes opened to see the power that sin has in you, together with the curse which attends it, and then to be freed from it. If there is such a thing upon earth as being the people of God, and some are not so, you must needs be full of thought to which of these two sorts you belong; you must be dead to all consideration, if you do not see blessing unspeakable on one hand, and nothing but danger and misery on the other. I am telling you what that danger is, and how great the misery of such a condition, on purpose that you may avoid it, and resolve without delay to have your portion with the people of God. Bethink yourselves, and do not wilfully shut your eyes against the light. Not a people! Why then you are the very persons this day and hour whom Christ speaks of, spirits in prison, lying in darkness and the shadow of death. You are without God in the world; whatever you are doing in it, whether you gain or lose, rich or poor, getting up and lying down, you are under his curse, and he beholds you continually as his enemies,
and

and vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. When the first man had forfeited all right to the favour of God, by his one act of disobedience, he relieved him from the dread he was under, and raised his drooping spirits, by telling him, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head*; Gen. iii. 15. that is, undo the unhappy effects of his sin, and work a great deliverance for him, and his posterity: but in this you have no share. You chuse to continue in death; and that very sentence which God pronounced upon him is still in force against you, *in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*, i. e. he should be liable to eternal death. For the sentence of bodily death was executed upon him, notwithstanding the promise which God had given him; and therefore the meaning of that promise must necessarily be, that if he accepted mercy he should not die eternally. Will you not accept it? Will you die eternally? Not a people! Then sin is unknown, unfelt, and unfeared. Then it has dominion over you. Then you are the children and people of the wicked one, and death will deliver you up to him as his right for ever. See, I say,

what you are on the wrong side of your work which God has given you to do in the world. Deal no longer deceitfully with your souls. It is a dreadful thing to be unconcern'd for them, whatever it is that hinders you, or to be always mistaken about our state, however it happens. Think well, think over and over again what it is to be a people. The people of God! *Happy, sure, are the people that are in such a case, yea blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God; Psal. cxliv. 15.* blessed in their going out and coming in, blessed in all they do. Those, I mean, who when the question is put to the soul, what they esteem their treasure, and covet as their portion, can answer at once, the Lord and his goodness. We all know that he is every man's best friend, and none can be so senseless as not to own it; and that the best thing we can do for ourselves is to make him so, by taking him for our God; but this is sooner said than done. And yet the text has no blessing for us till we both think and say it unfeignedly. For God's people is a willing people. If they are so at all, it is by their own consent and free choice; and there is no idol in their hearts which they bow down to more than him,
nothing

nothing in the world which they prefer to his favour. These are the blessed of the Lord. His nature, his will, his word and promises, are all engaged for their security that they shall never lose what they have set their hearts upon, never be disappointed of their hope, and that *all things shall work together for their good*. Rom. viii. 28. Prosperity or adversity, health or sickness, the frowns or favour of the world, the good things of life which corrupt, the crosses which fret and gall the spirits of other men, are thankfully received, or well endured, and nothing shall by any means hurt them. For why? they are the people of God; and whatever comes to them from his hand cannot but be intended for their good, is dispensed to them with unerring wisdom, with all the kindness of a never-failing friend, and all the love of an indulgent father. They know they may trust all their concerns in his hands, and lie down in peace, having an eye watching over them which never sleeps, and almighty power to guard them. And, what is the crown of all, they can meet death, if not wholly without fear, yet with a well-grounded hope, and look beyond it to that happy time when they shall sin and sorrow no more,

more, be freed from all their wants, and put in possession of all their wishes. For this is the great end of God in taking them for his 'people, and the great end which they have in view in taking him for their God. He intends nothing less for them than himself, and their eyes are ever looking to him, and their hearts chiefly fixed upon the future, everlasting enjoyment of him. Comforts they have in hand, peculiar to themselves, and what others know nothing of; but these they do not regard as their portion from him, but leave it to him to give or take away as he pleases. Whilst they are in the world they must partake of the common lot of mankind, be sick, grieve for the miseries which are in the world, and for the loss of friends, suffer, and die at last. Nay, God sometimes finds hard work for his people, and puts them to extraordinary trials. And they are not stocks and stones, they must feel the load he lays upon them; and happy enough they are in seeing the use of suffering, but they must not expect to be without it. The world is the world to them as well as others, *vanity and vexation of spirit*; and they must say, as Jacob, one of the most favoured of men, did, *few and evil have the days of the years*
of

of my life been. You see I do not over-rate the happiness of God's people, as if it was a state of perfect freedom from all trouble; for this would be leading you into a mistake, and there is no such thing upon earth. Though I am verily persuaded that they have more quietness, peace of mind, and true enjoyment in the world than others, and pass better through it in all respects, yet they will feel more or less of Adam's curse in it, and have frequent occasion to be convinced that their rest is not here. And if in the main they did not make little account of the world, and of every thing in it, they would be no better in God's eyes than other men. Heaven is their home and their hope, and eternity their support; and if it was not their belief, desire, and expectation, they would not be the people of God. For the character of all such is, that *they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly.* And what follows these words, Heb. xi. 16. is very remarkable; WHEREFORE, because they are so persuaded, and so minded, *God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.* The Scripture says still more; they are come to it already. As being God's people, they are members of his family

family and kingdom, invested with all the privileges, and entitled to all the blessings of it. He sees them in it, and belonging to it now, while they are upon earth; and they rejoice in the belief of it themselves, though the glory of it is hidden from them. The words I have to mention to you, as a full proof of the happy, happy condition of God's people, are written Heb. xii. 22—24. and contain a great deal more than I have said, or can say to you of it. With them I shall conclude this head; and oh! that God would seal the instruction and comfort of them to your hearts, and set your souls on fire for the blessedness of believers. Hear the words: *But ye are come*—observe, it is not said, ye *shall*, but ye *are come*—unto mount Sion—as mount Sion was the seat of God's worship to his people the Jews, here he dwelt in his temple, it is here put to signify the place where his covenanted people, all living Christians, meet together in Spirit now, and will come together hereafter in glory. *And unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born—God's heirs—which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the*

the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel—crieth louder in the ears of God for mercy, than that of Abel did, or all our sins do, for vengeance. See, says the Apostle, that ye refuse not him that speaketh. And of him, the Lord Jesus, and the sprinkling of his blood, I am to speak under the next head.

P A R T II.

II. I am to shew by what means we attain to the happy state of God's people, and how we may assure ourselves that we are in it.

But first let me tell you that the people of God know as certainly how they attain to this state, as that they are his people. And I wish you would take notice of this, and consider how vain a thing it is for any to think they have obtained mercy, when they never sought after it, and neither know what it is, nor why they want it, nor in what way it comes to them. St. Peter, speaking of Christians, says, *they have tasted that the Lord is gracious; they have come to Christ as unto a living stone, that they also as lively stones*

stones might be built up a spiritual house; that he is precious to them that believe; that they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. But how can any of these things be said of those, who not only live in great ignorance of them, but plead their ignorance as what they think will excuse them before God? How can Christ be precious to them, when for want of knowing what he is, and what he has to do for them, they must necessarily be without concern about their interest in him, and can possibly have no value for him, or his benefits? My brethren, if you would be willing to know the truth of your condition, it might be the beginning of salvation to you. But if those who are not a people, will go on blindly presuming that they are, in spite of Reason and Scripture, there is no hope of their ever being so. I pray God open your hearts to attend to the word, while I shew how and by what means we become the people of God.

The answer of Scripture is, *we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* Gal. iii. 26. *We are by nature children of wrath,* Eph. ii. 3. fallen from God in our first father into a state of death, abominable in his sight, as being ourselves corrupt and
sinful,

sinful, and must perish for ever if we are not discharged from condemnation, accounted righteous, and restored to his favour. And there was no other method of reconciling sinful man to his maker, no way or means to effect this great alteration in our condition, but by the merits and death of Christ, there being *no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved*. Acts iv. 12. He therefore was appointed of God, and willingly offered himself, not only to be crucified for our sins, and pay the debt we owed to divine justice, but to work out a perfect righteousness for us, that we might stand as clear of all blame before God as if we had never sinned, and be accepted to the reward of eternal life. So we obtain mercy, so we become the people of God, by what Christ has done and suffered for us, and by our faith in it. And to shew you what faith is, and how we come to it, I here ask the question, which your own consciences cannot but answer truly: Was any part of this your work? Did you make your own peace with God? Did you reverse the sentence of death which was gone out against you, and open for yourselves a way into heaven? Did you satisfy offended, almighty justice, or
pay

pay a perfect obedience in your own persons to the law; of which it is said, that *one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from it, not the least part of it shall ever be dispensed with, or righteousness imputed to man, till all be fulfilled?* Matt. v. 18. No; but Jesus did. He took our nature upon him, that in it and for it he might fulfil all righteousness, and present it spotless to God. He suffered death in our stead, not to save us from the necessity of dying out of this world, but that we might not die into hell. By his obedience unto death he *finished the work which the Father gave him to do, he bore the curse of our sins in his own body, was made the Lord our righteousness, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified; namely, by his one offering of himself.* John xvii. 4. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Jer. xxiii. 6. Heb. x. 14. He came down from heaven to work this great salvation for us; he was appointed to the office of redeeming us, because no other could be found in earth or heaven who was capable of undertaking it; and hard work it was even for him to sustain the weight of it. Think of this, I beseech you; consider what was to be done before the sin of the world could be taken away, and then you will clearly understand to whom we
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are indebted for it, and that we could possibly have no share in it. No salvation by our own works, says St. Paul over and over again; and I am often putting you in mind of this, because it is a most weighty and fundamental point of belief, and unless you are well grounded in it, Christ can be nothing to you but *a stone of stumbling; and a rock of offence*. You will put yourselves, and your own miserable unworthiness, in his stead; you will make lame work of your repentance, if you ever think of it at all; you will mistake God, mistake sin, mistake holiness, and every thing belonging to salvation. God is just, and man is sinful, and *the wages of sin is death*. Rom. vi. 23. The work therefore we have to do, is either to live without sin, or to revoke that sentence. We can do neither; we could as soon make a world, or pull God from his throne; and you see at once how desperate our case would be, if we were left to ourselves to make our peace with God by any will, work, or endeavours of our own. But when we have gained this point of knowledge, that deliverance is not of ourselves, we can understand what faith is, and betake ourselves to the rock of our salvation.

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We can then see that there is no other possible way of becoming the children and people of God, than by obtaining mercy, venturing our souls upon Christ, and pleading what he has done and suffered, for our present peace and eternal justification. *In him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*; Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. through him we are received to the adoption of sons; for his sake we are beloved of God, and heirs of the riches of his grace; in him accepted, and saved from first to last. As he did what we could not, and all he did was for our sakes, it is all ours, whenever we receive him into our hearts, as *of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*. 1 Cor. i. 30. But who are they that believe all this, and rejoice in the comfort of it? Not the impenitent; in which I reckon not only the openly dissolute and profane, but all those who never saw the guilt of sin, and their condition in sin. Let them be what they will in other respects, they cannot look out for a remedy till they know their want of it; they cannot possibly fly to Christ as their refuge, till they are convinced that nothing else can relieve them. Not those who will not resign themselves

selves to his teaching and government, or disregard the holiness he requires of us. Whatever pretences they make to faith are groundless, dishonourable to Christ, and a cheat upon themselves. None but those who having come to him to be washed from their sins in his blood, are as willing to forsake them; think themselves bound to walk by his rule; endeavour as God shall enable them to be holy in all manner of conversation, and strike at the root of sin in the heart. So closely does one thing follow another in our salvation by Christ; and if you leave out any part of it, you lose him altogether, for he will not be divided. If you have been brought to faith in him by the knowledge of sin, and a true work of repentance, you will not desire to retain it; and if you did, you can never think it safe to continue in it, when you see God's vengeance against it, and how severely it was punished in the person of Christ. If you know what he has done and suffered for you, by a faith of the Spirit's working, you will love him; and if you love him, you will study to shew it in the way he so earnestly and repeatedly requires of you, by keeping his commandments. That our salvation is Christ's work, and not our own,

is the great foundation of our hope, and must never be questioned. But then our own holiness is a necessary part of his salvation; and though we cannot be saved for it, yet if we are not renewed by him to the desire and love of it, here is full proof against us that nothing is done, and that if we have not the faith which worketh by love, and purifieth the heart, we have none at all. For as sure as we belong to Christ, *we are God's workmanship, created in him unto good works, which God hath before ordained, or, for which he hath fitted and prepared us, namely, by faith in Christ Jesus, that we should live in them.* Eph. ii. 10.

If you should ask how faith is wrought in us, whether all at once, by an extraordinary gift, or in a more ordinary way, by a gradual operation of the Spirit, assisting and enlightening our minds, in reading, hearing, and meditating on the word? I would answer, that instances of the former kind there are several in Scripture, as Matthew and other Apostles, Paul, Cornelius, Lydia, the Jailor. And what has been may be, and I believe really is, for reasons best known to God, in every time and place where the Gospel is preached. But then it is a great error, very disquieting to many of the children of
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God, and must by no means be maintained, that there is no other way of coming to faith but in an instant, with a clear knowledge of the way in which it is brought to us. For generally speaking it is not so; but more a work of time, in the use of means, and in different persons in different degrees. And certain it is, that we receive Christ with all his benefits, when we depend only upon him for peace with God, and walk with him, as all his servants and followers do, in a purpose of obedience. I say, if we hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which is given us in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, trusting in him as our Mediator and Advocate with God, and conforming to his rule, certain it is that our faith is saving; and we should be great enemies to ourselves if we questioned the soundness of it, or entertained the least doubt whether we can *say that Jesus is the Lord by the Holy Ghost*. And let it be assuredly believed that *no man can say it but by the Holy Ghost*; 1 Cor. xii. 3. a point which must by no means be forgotten, or lightly passed over, when we are considering how and by what means we become the people of God. For without him we can do nothing, neither understand,

nor repent, nor believe, to the saving of the soul; and whatever we do will be a fruitless labour, and of no value in the sight of God, if he is not working at the root of it. He is the gift of the Father and the Son to us, appointed and sent in Christ's stead to begin, carry on, and complete the work of our redemption. We say in the Nicene Creed that we believe in him as *the author and giver of life*, or the quickener of our spirits to a new state of grace and holiness, in the manner described John xvi. by reproof and convincing us of sin, revealing Christ to us for righteousness, and judging the prince of this world, that is the devil, by casting him out of the possession he has gotten in our hearts. By him therefore we are brought to repentance, grafted into Christ for all his benefits, live worthy of our high calling, are supported, strengthened, and comforted in every part of our Christian progress. By him, taking possession of us, and as it were lying down with us in our graves, we shall be raised from the dead; and if he does not dwell in us, we shall rise indeed by the power of God to condemnation, but not by the Spirit of God to life everlasting. I said before that he lives and acts in us as he pleases. He came to
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the Apostles at the day of Pentecost visibly and forcibly, as well as others afterwards whom we read of in Scripture; and he never tied up his hands from acting upon some at all times in a way of extraordinary grace. Nay, it is the way in which he manifests himself to the world from time to time, to keep alive the belief of him, and to the awakening of many souls to seek after his influences, besides those who are the immediate subjects of them; though not to prescribe a method to him, or look for his help exactly in the same way and manner in which it has been vouchsafed to others; for he *divideth to every man severally as he will*, 1. Cor. xii. 11. and his operations for the most part are in secret. He enlightens our understandings, renews our wills and affections, and governs in our souls, in the sanctified use of means, and in the right application of our own reason, as assisted and directed by him. Whatever is done to purpose in religion he is the doer of it, and our souls can no more be alive unto God without him than the body can live without the soul. But what can it signify to those who never put themselves into his hands, in what way he acts and moves us? One thing is certain, that they themselves

are blind, and whatever their outward form and appearance is, strangers to his operations. The grace of God they are not made partakers of, and it is well if they do not despise and deride the agency of the Holy Ghost. The *things of God they receive not*; they are either too obstinate in wickedness to seek after them, or too wise and good in their own conceits to acknowledge their want of them.

We may now, from what has been said, collect the answer to the enquiry proposed under this head, by what means we attain to the state mentioned in the text, and also how we may assure ourselves that we are in it. I shall give it you in few words, and happy will you be if your hearts can bear witness to it.

By Christ, and not by any work or sufficiency of our own, we obtain mercy to become the people of God.

Our trust in him for remission of sins, and acceptance with God, is the faith by which we are saved.

This faith is by a spiritual discernment of our want of Christ for salvation, and of his all-sufficiency to save us.

And lastly, wherever it is a spiritual work, it begins in repentance, carries us
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on to holiness, and proves itself to our consciences by the sincerity of our obedience.

Leave out this last, and you have nothing but a dead faith, and miserably deceive yourselves if you hope well of your state. To keep your peace with God, there must be an unfeigned hearty purpose of obedience; and if there is such a purpose, there will be a progress in it. The wise and well-disposed are too apt to slumber and sleep, and the best may fall by temptation; but if they do not rise again from it, recover their purpose, and return to their duty, they are lost for ever. For the people of God, as sure as they are so, are renewed to the desire and love of holiness, *shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light* by the purity of their conversation, and esteem it no small part of their happiness under him that they can serve him with freedom of spirit. St. Peter will not suffer you to deceive yourselves in this matter. He tells you, that *as new born babes you must desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*. It is the food appointed of God for the preservation and nourishment of your new life; and if you have no appetite for it, it is certain you are not quickened
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to that life. Do you, or do you not desire to feed upon it for growth in grace and holiness? Try yourselves here. If you would persuade yourselves upon good grounds that the end you are aiming at is to be of the number of God's people, see that you be diligent in the use of those helps and means without which you cannot reasonably hope to obtain it. Do not be so foolish as to think you can have any assurance of the goodness of your state without a life of godliness, or that there can be a godly life without the actions which are proper to it, and fitted to produce and maintain it. Reading and hearing the word of God is one of them. Again, are the blessings therein brought to your knowledge, and offered to your acceptance, not worth praying for? Do you pretend to believe that a great salvation has been wrought for you, and that you must be miserable for ever if you are not made partakers of it, and can you be so unconcerned about it as not to ask it of God, and make it the burden of all your prayers? Especially, when you know that he has made your asking the condition of receiving: *Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; Matt. vii. 7.* if you ask, seek,

seek, and knock, truly and earnestly, and not otherwise. And surely, if you were believers, your own sense of the greatness of the benefits to be obtained, and your great want of them, would drive you to prayer, if God had not called you to it. Your hearts would ask; they would say more to God than your tongues can, and you would be forward and willing of yourselves to all kinds of prayer; prayer in public, prayer in secret, prayer with your families. Nothing would be neglected which you know to be necessary for carrying on your great design of obtaining and keeping mercy; no means of God's appointing for your establishment in the faith, and growth in grace, would be slighted; not the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It could not be if you were alive unto God, and had any real, affecting sense of your salvation from the curse of sin, and eternal misery, by the death of Christ. You will take notice that I mention these outward things to help you in the trial of your state. The question is, how you may assure yourselves that you are in a state of grace and salvation? And the answer is, by your faith, and the life of faith; when you know first that you have come repenting and sorrowing to
Christ,

Christ, as your Saviour from the guilt and condemnation of sin; and then give up yourselves to be taught and governed by him, and maintain a Christian walk with him in all such ways as he has appointed for the security and increase of your faith and holiness. Can you think and call yourselves Christians, and be content to live, as too many do, in the neglect or careless performance of public worship? Can you be the servants and people of God without a diligent, conscientious study of his word, without prayer, in private, and with your families? Can you be the disciples of Christ without a high value and esteem for the blessed sacrament of his body and blood; in which you are called upon to remember the sacrifice of his death, the necessity of it, the love there was in it, and the obligation it lays you under to live unto him that died for you? Let these things bear witness against you, as marks of an unregenerate state; and I say again, do not think there can be a godly and a Christian life without the actions of it, or a diligent use of those helps and means which are the signs of it, and as necessary for the nourishment and well-being of the soul, as our food is for the support of the bodily life. I do
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not mean that the greatest exactness in an outward form of religion is of itself a sufficient proof of the soundness of any man's state; for it may be counterfeited, and by a great mistake is too frequently substituted in the room of real conversion, or grace in the heart. But wherever there is true religion, it will necessarily shew itself in all such acts and exercises as are suitable to a religious state, as being the way in which we draw nigh to God, the means of deriving a blessing from God to our souls, and strictly required of us as the duties we owe him. It would be strange indeed if we could be *a chosen generation*, without any degree of zeal in the worship of God; *a royal priesthood*, without any duties and services to offer up to him; *a holy nation*, without an appearance of holiness; *a peculiar people*, without any difference of religious behaviour from the rest of the world. If therefore we would be the people of God, and have the comfort of knowing it, let us lay Christ for the foundation of our hope toward God, let us take him for the Lord our righteousness, and make him the anchor of our souls, and only refuge from the guilt that is upon us; that believing and rejoicing in God our Saviour,

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we may present him with the obedience of our hearts, and make it appear to the world and to ourselves that we belong to him, both by the regularity of our behaviour in his service, and the holiness of our lives and conversations. So we shall keep our faith, live in hope, and die in peace.

P A R T III.

III. I am to shew the necessity of our attaining to the happy state of God's people.

It is just a matter of the same necessity as it is to be saved. It is the very thing which Christ came into the world to accomplish in the souls of those whom he saves, what he wrought his miracles for, the end for which he died upon the cross, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. And he hath left us his will for this purpose in writing, appointed his servants under him upon earth to explain and enforce it, and is always with us in the power of the Holy Ghost to preach it to our hearts; and all to the end we may be brought into the happy state of God's people, rejoice in the mercy of our deliverance from sin, death, and hell, and make it the chief end
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of our living to secure to ourselves so great a benefit. And what I have farther to say to you upon this head, is only this one thing, that if you are not stirred up effectually to seek after the grace of God, and the salvation which is by Christ, if you do not come to him in repentance, and know him now by faith as your Saviour, and live unto him by his rule, you perish for ever. Conversion from a dead state in sin, wretched ignorance, or the cares of a worldly life to the neglect of the soul, conversion, I say, is the point; the opening of your eyes, the turning of your wills, to the acknowledgement of God and of Christ, this is the work which the Spirit has to do in you, and must of all necessity be carefully and strictly attended to as your work under him. What we could not possibly do, Christ has done for us. We had no blood to pour out for the remission of sins, no righteousness to offer to God, no counsel, might, or will for the redemption of our souls. He alone could pay the price of it; he alone could take up our sins, bear the whole weight of divine vengeance against them, and blot them for ever out of God's book by the blood of his cross. He alone could fulfil all righteousness, and put it into our hands
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to appear with before God. And all he requires of us for what he has done and suffered on our behalf, is, that we would acknowledge the desert of our sins, thankfully accept the mercy he has obtained for us, and in the sense of his love bind ourselves to his service, and return to our obedience. Do this, and I can tell you in the name of Christ that you shall live; refuse this offer, and mercy is at an end with you. Why, he says it himself; *He that believeth, in Christ for the remission of sins, and is baptized, or by the rite of baptism solemnly owns his belief, and obliges himself to live suitably to it, shall be saved.* Again he says, *he that believeth not, that sin must be forgiven, can be forgiven only through Christ, and is forgiven that it may be forsaken, shall be damned.* Mark xvi. 16. And what I am now advising you to consider and be well aware of, is, that mercy does not consist, as I fear you think, in receiving the impenitent and unbelieving to pardon, or overlooking the sins they live in, and make light of; but in providing such a remedy for us in our undone state as we could not provide for ourselves; and may chuse or not; but which can be of no benefit to any till they receive it in the love thereof, and
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in the belief of it turn from the world to God, from sin to holiness. Christ said to the blind man; *go, and wash in the pool of Siloam; and he went, and washed, and came seeing.* John ix. 7. Do you think he would have received his sight if he had not gone? He says to you, *repent and believe the Gospel.* This is his salvation; he has told us all in few words what we must do for our recovery, and has no other means in reserve to help us out in case of wilful neglect. And can you think to be saved without repentance and faith, and *bringing forth fruits meet for repentance*? It does not become me to set bounds to mercy. Blessed be God, it is infinite, and has operated on our behalf far beyond what we could conceive. But then it is most dangerous presumption to take it to ourselves in opposition to the declared will of God; and it would be doing unspeakable injury to your souls not to tell you faithfully what that will is. And I now therefore tell you with the same earnestness and sincerity as if they were the last words I should ever speak to you, that as Christ reconciles us to God, and makes us his people, so the mercy we obtain through him works to obedience and purity of heart, and can only be effectual to us by our living

as his people, and fashioning ourselves according to his word.

And now, dearly beloved, I would exhort you by all your hopes to consider and lay to heart these words of St. Peter: *which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* Once not a people, but now the people of God, is a blessed change in the condition of sinners. For the people of God are dear to him now as the children of his own bowels, the purchase of Christ's blood, the living temples of the Holy Ghost, and will be his people for ever and ever. Now not a people! Oh! the wretchedness of such a state, beyond what words can describe! to repeat the Lord's prayer with a lie in your mouths, when you say, "our Father," to have no share in Christ, not to be quickened by the Spirit, to lose your baptism, to have heaven shut against you: can you bear to think of this? And what hinders you from putting the question to yourselves with great seriousness, and godly concern—Am I one of God's people, or am I not, have I obtained mercy, or have I not? If you have, then you know what sin is, that none but Christ could save you
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from it, and you are endeavouring for his sake; and in the fear of God, to put the accursed thing from you. Then you read the Scripture, to know what the will of God is; then you are in a state of prayer that you may do it, and walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. Then if you were to be asked, what is the pearl of great price, and the joy and treasure of your hearts? you could answer at once, Christ and his salvation. Then you know either that you have always kept close to God, and to your vow in baptism, fighting against sin, and growing in grace; or else that there was a time when you were ignorant of the things of God, regardless of your spiritual concerns, and lived only to your own will and pleasure; but that now you have your eyes opened to see clearly the danger and misery of such a condition, and are happily brought home to Christ. What can you say to these things, and what is it that hinders you from making the enquiry, Am I in Christ, or not? If you never entered upon this examination, and find a backwardness in yourselves to do it now, it is a very bad sign, and you may be sure that all is wrong with you. You would not act thus in a worldly matter, or where a

small property was to be gained or lost. But I say, what hinders you from thinking of the state of your souls, or how your lot is likely to be cast for eternity? Is it the farm, or the shop, trade, or daily labour? Hard indeed would the lot of all such be, if they were necessarily excluded by their condition in life from the common benefit of the Saviour of mankind. But this is contrary both to truth and matter of fact. For the knowledge of salvation, and strict attention to it, is not only consistent with any man's worldly business, but, when rightly understood, a help to it; as it engages him to a conscientious diligence in it, binds him to the law of sobriety, temperance and frugality, and is the surest means of bringing down the blessing of God upon his endeavours. At the first preaching of the Gospel, both St. Paul and St. James tell us that the poor and busy part of mankind were the chosen of God, rich in faith, and heirs of his grace; and it is to be hoped there are many such at all times, who *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, in the first place*, and at the same time that they *give all diligence to make their calling and election sure*, are at least as industrious, prudent, and successful in their worldly affairs

fairs as other men. But if you will still abide by this plea of business, as an excuse for your ignorance or neglect of the common salvation, then hear Christ. *Martha, Martha*, says he, *thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful*. Luke x. 41, 42. As you love your souls, let this be a word of conviction to you, and suffer not a thought to arise in your hearts that any thing else is more needful. And again, when the servant who was sent to bid many to the supper of the Gospel, came and told his Lord that all with one consent excused themselves for worldly reasons, he answered, that *none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper*. Luke xiv. 24. What now must I say to you? And what would you think of me, if I was to tell you in downright contradiction to Christ, that all may be well with you, though you slight his invitation, refuse mercy, and will not come in upon his call to be the people of God? Refuse mercy! No, you will say, God forbid; that your appearance in this place to offer up your prayers to God, and hear his word read and preached, bears witness for you that you do not; and moreover that you live reputably in the world, and have as good hearts and

good meanings as the best. But now suppose you had never been baptized, and were told in order to it, that you must *renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh*; that you must believe all the articles of the Christian faith; keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life; and that otherwise you could not be members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven: would not this put you to a stand? Would you not think it necessary to have some proper knowledge, and enquire carefully into the meaning of what you promise to believe and do, before you took the vow upon you? Would you not ask your hearts over and over again, whether you were sincere in it? And could you think yourselves entitled to the benefits made over to you in baptism, if you did not seriously purpose to perform the conditions on which they depend? Well now, you have been baptised, you have been received into Christ's flock, you profess to believe in him, worship God in his name, and are called upon from time to time to understand why you believe, what are the blessings you hope for, and what engagements you
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laid yourselves under: and what do you do? you plead ignorance, business, want of time, civility of behaviour, the poor form of your appearance in this place on Sundays, and I know not how many other things against real conversion by Christ, knowledge of your want of him, faith grounded upon that knowledge, and religion in the heart. My brethren, I am sure that none who take up these excuses are fit to be admitted to baptism, neither would they think of it themselves. You may make a great matter of your being baptised, and called Christians; but I leave you to judge, and I pray God enable you to do it effectually, whether you do not build a great deal too much upon it, and whether any can be the people and children of God, and heirs of everlasting life, without the knowledge of their baptismal vow, and a life framed according to it. If therefore you would be the people of God, you must know what it is to be so, and learn to pray that *the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the*

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saints. Eph. i. 17, 18. So St. Paul prayed for the Ephesians; and so he taught them and us to pray for ourselves; hereby giving us to understand what a Christian state is, and that all alike, without any difference of high or low, must both know the nature of their high calling in Christ, and be earnest with God in prayer to be enlightened in it more and more, and have all the blessings of it confirmed to them, as what above all things they esteem and covet. God is a reconciled Father to his people, and takes delight in them as the children and heirs of his kingdom. Then before, we were alienated from him, and enemies to him, and so accounted of by him, or else we should not have needed the mercy of reconciliation: do you know this? Reconciliation was not effected by any work of our own, but is the gift and grace of God to us, and the mercy of it obtained for us by the obedience and sufferings of Jesus Christ: do you believe this? And do you see what a dreadful evil sin is, and what a curse there is in it, when it could be purged, and a way opened for us to the favour of God, with nothing but the blood of Christ? Do you perceive that your own sin must either be so purged, or lie upon your souls for ever? Do you know that the
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Holy Spirit must open your eyes to discern between light and darkness, life and death, to see your condemnation in sin, and deliverance from it, to incline your hearts and wills to embrace this great salvation, to rejoice in the faith of it, and to live unto God as those who are redeemed from their vain conversation in the world, and hope to live with him for ever? And are you walking with God according to this knowledge and belief, and whatever your degree of understanding, faith, and hope is, praying for the increase of it? This is being the people of God; and if you have any belief of the happiness of such a state, the present comfort and future glory of it; if you know indeed how lost you are in yourselves, and how gracious the Lord has been to you, you cannot but desire and pray above all things to be established in it. When Christ had been discoursing with the two disciples after his resurrection, and *expounding to them in all the Scriptures the things in them concerning himself, they said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32. Such hearts he makes wherever he comes, and Christ opened there
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sets them on fire. Do not therefore think you can be Christians without prizing Christ and his salvation; or that you can prize it without knowing what it is; or that you can know what it is, without knowing your want of it. He delivers from sin, removes the load of it from the conscience, and the power of it from the heart; but if your sin has never been discovered to you, in the daily breach of God's commandments, Christ will be as nothing in your eyes. You must therefore give way to this discovery, cast away all your vain excuses, be willing to know the truth of your condition, beg of God to search you, and when you find that you are not his people, give yourselves no rest till you are.

Some of you may be grown old without ever making the enquiry, or one serious thought about the salvation of Christ. Oh! redeem the little time you have left. Pray to God to open your eyes. Seek the Lord while he may be found. The door of grace still stands open for you, if you will enter into it. Christ has a heart and a will to receive you, if you will come unto God by him. Make haste and escape for the life of your souls. Do not die without obtaining mercy.

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If you are in the strength and vigour of your age, and have a prospect, as you think, of many years to come, let Christ teach you how to sweeten them to yourselves. And if upon looking back you do not find that hitherto you have made him your hope and your confidence, think what poor comfort you take up with in the way of sin, or a mere worldly life, in comparison of what you might have from a well-grounded assurance that you are of the number of God's people. Think how uncertain life is, how short at the best, and how dreadful it would be to be called to your last account, without being in readiness for it by a life of faith.

To the young man I say, *remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth.* Eccl. xii. 1. Mark that word *now*. Lift not yourselves into the devil's service, lest you never escape from it. Give him not a day of your lives. See on the one hand the broad way of destruction, and Christ on the other pointing out and calling you into the way of grace and salvation. If you make a right choice now, you will be established more and more in Christ's peace, make God your friend, fear nothing that can befall you in the world, knowing that he is so,
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and be prepared for his time of calling you out of it, whether it be sooner or later. But if you chuse to live without God, without Christ and Christian hope, never ask yourselves what you must do to be saved, and rush blindly into the snares which are laid for you by the enemy of your souls, you have nothing before you but a bitter repentance, if that time should ever come; and in the mean while you are in a state which you should tremble to think of.

Let those who live in sin, and flatter themselves with the hope of mercy, without repentance, know that they are not the Lord's people. They do not so much as believe in God, but disown and deny him, according to the revelation he has made of himself. For the God who made the heavens and the earth, the God of Scripture, is he who has a right to govern his creatures, and will be obeyed. If ever you give way to cool reflection, consider how wretchedly absurd and impious the thought is, and how impossible it is that you should be entitled to his favour, or objects of mercy, while you continue in rebellion against him. Oh! quit this vain delusion, give up the lie in your right hand, and turn your eyes to the God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ; in him calling you to be his people, and with astonishing patience yet waiting to be gracious to you; in him *forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin*, your ten thousand provocations of his justice, but *who will by no means clear the guilty*; as all are who do not see their guilt taken away by Christ, and in the sense of so great a mercy live unto him that died for them, and become new creatures in the truth of a pure obedience.

Let those who exalt themselves against the Saviour, and in the main make but little account of *salvation by grace, through faith*, because they have a better appearance than many others, and can justify themselves before men, remember that they have to do with a heart-searching God, and that sins innumerable will be found upon them to their everlasting confusion, if they have not made Christ their hope. He stooped very low, and submitted to a painful life and ignominious death to save them from the sin which looks so little in their eyes; but if they will not condescend to be washed in his blood, as sinners, learn of him a better holiness than they will ever teach themselves, and with unfeigned humility call themselves unprofitable servants when
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they have done the very best they ever will do, he will despise their boasted morals, has already excluded them from the number of God's people, and pronounced the sentence of condemnation upon their self-righteous formality, in these words three several times repeated—*whofoever exalteth himself shall be abased*. Matt. xxiii. 12. Luke xiv. 11. xviii. 14.

O ye people of God, in faith, hope, and charity, I am not worthy to speak to you. One word you will bear from an Apostle of our Lord: as you have given up your names to Christ, go on in the power of his might, *building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life*. Jude 20, 21.

And I say to all, in the words of St. James, *draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*. iv. 8. Make deep search into yourselves; know your hearts, know your sin; look unto Jesus, as the peace-maker in his blood, and the Lord our righteousness, that you may rejoice in the mercy of heaven, and live unto God as his people in faith and holiness. Indeed, my brethren, one hour of serious Scripture reading, one
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prayer

prayer from the heart, would do a great deal towards removing those mountains of difficulties which now stand in your way. I do not mean that you would, or ought to be content with that, for if you were once awakened you would see the necessity of doing a great deal more; but a sad thing it is, not to have one such hour, one such prayer, to think of in a whole life. The Lord grant unto us, that in the acceptance of his mercy, in the faith of Christ, and the power of the eternal Spirit, we may all be his people; not for worldly things, or even spiritual comforts, desirable as they are; but *pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 14. and *striving to enter into that blessed rest which remaineth to the people of God*, in the everlasting enjoyment of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N X.

M A T T. VII. 7.

Ask, and it shall be given you : seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

P RAYER is the life of a Christian, and the proof of a Christian state. I mean secret prayer ; the desire of the heart for spiritual blessings ; that we may live unto God, and be fitted for heaven by the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. Prayer for repentance, prayer for faith, prayer for holiness. Prayer, for the spirit to enlighten our understandings, to alter the vicious bent of our wills and affections, to keep us steady to our great work, and carry us happily through it. These are the things we want ; what God wants to give us, what Christ came to offer us, and what therefore we must and shall pray for, if ever we be recovered

vered to God by him. We must know distinctly that we want remission of sins, peace with God, and spiritual strength; and be very inwardly stirred up to seek after them as the life of our souls.

My friends, *do* you, *can* you thus pray for your souls? And is the desire of your hearts indeed turned to God, for the blessings of Christ and his Gospel? Then your eyes are opened, you are in God's way of happiness, and there shall be a performance of all that has been told you. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." God is your Father, Christ is your Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit will be your guide and comforter. The portion you chuse for yourselves, and ask of God, is kept safe for you; and no accident, no malice of men or devils can deprive you of it. The desire of heaven will as certainly carry you thither, as God is now there. If your prayers are gone before, you must follow them. Christ has taken possession of it in your names; and where He is, there shall you be also. He has prepared a place for you, and will prepare you for it, by raising up the life and nature of heaven in you. This is what I am to open, and declare to you; and I pray God enable

me to do it to your conviction. Christ says, ask, seek, knock, i. e. as I have already told you, ask for the Spirit, seek for a blessing upon your souls, knock that the door of grace may be opened to you. If you are a natural worldly man, pray that your eyes may be opened, and your heart turned within you; if you are a convinced man, pray that your sins may be forgiven: if you are a believer, pray continually for your establishment in the faith, and increase in godliness. And that they are the things of the Spirit, and those only, which you are here required to ask, you may be satisfied by comparing Luke xi. 13. where it is said, “If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the HOLY SPIRIT to them that ask him?”

1. Therefore consider, the *importance* of them. The things of this world, we *may* want. We may be patient and contented, though we have them not: we may be well pleased and happy without them. For the most part, they are a hindrance to us in our Christian progress; and if they are not desired with moderation, and employed to the glory of God, will be a curse to us instead of a blessing. But the things which God

offers to our choice, and warrants us to ask of him, peace by Jesus Christ, renewal to his image, in holiness, and fitness for heaven, as they are unspeakably great in themselves, so we must be for ever undone, if we are not possessed of them. They are the riches of our souls, and the things of eternity. Everlasting happiness or misery, depends upon our seeking or not seeking after them. They are what Christ calls the one thing needful; needful in the highest degree, and as if nothing else was so. Whatever else we do for ourselves, can signify nothing to the great end we were made for, the favour of God, and our acceptance with him. And for this end, Christ came into the world, that he might raise us out of our dead state, turn our eyes and hearts to the work of our salvation, convince us of the necessity of securing it, and put us in a way of doing it. He saw us in our wretched condition of blindness, corruption, and alienation from God. He saw us dead in trespasses and sins, the devil's bond slaves, and liable to eternal death. Our misery pierced him to the heart. And when nothing could relieve us from it, but his incarnation and death, he took our flesh, and with it our sins, and was

made a curse for us, that we might be delivered from wrath, and have hope towards God. See your condition in this glass. Think how it appears to God. Consider what Christ did and suffered to open your eyes, to bring you to repentance, to reconcile you to God by faith, to confirm you in a state of holy willing obedience, to prepare you for the heavenly inheritance; and you will be convinced of the necessity of being so prepared; and of the great value and importance of the blessings he has purchased for you, and of the graces he came to work in you. You would ask them of God, as you would pray for your lives; and be very thankful to him for putting you in a condition of obtaining them by Christ, and for giving you such an assurance of it as he has done in the words of the text—
“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”—

2. Besides the great value of the things to be asked, and their unspeakable importance to us, let us also duly consider our *weakness*. They must be had, and yet of ourselves, we cannot attain them. For *it is God that worketh in us, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure*. Phil. ii. 13. And
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this is manifestly implied in the exhortation to ask, seek, and knock. For God would not put us upon asking of *him* what we have of our own, and could easily give to ourselves if we please. No; the Spirit with all his blessings is *his* gift. Repentance is his gift, faith is his gift, holiness is his gift. Our whole salvation is his gift, and we want assistance in every part of it. Our souls must be continually watered with the dew of heaven, and can only bring forth fruit, as the earth does, by a blessing from above. The work we have to do, can never prosper in our hands, without some better help than our own. We are bowed down with a spirit of infirmity. We have crooked natures, which we cannot reform; earthly hearts, which we cannot change; stubborn wills, which we cannot bend; evil lustings, and unruly passions, which we cannot master in our own strength. Brethren, I fear we generally deceive ourselves in two respects; either by taking a false measure of our work, or supposing that it may go well with us, though we leave it undone. If in the main we think it needless, we shall of course be slothful in it, and mind other things a great deal more. And on the other hand, if we take a wrong

measure of our work, that is, bring it down to a small matter, and proportion it to our abilities, and resolve with ourselves that God shall accept us for what we can do without him, we shall for ever keep ourselves out of the way of help. But when once we are convinced in good earnest that we are in an evil case by departing from God, and must become new creatures; that our natural desires and inclinations must be changed; that sin must be hated, and God loved; that we must cleave to Christ in sincerity, and forsake the vain customs of the world, and put ourselves in the pilgrim's path to heaven; that we must strike at the root of all corruption in the heart, and be holy as God is holy, and perfect as he is perfect: we shall then say, who is sufficient for these things? and cry mightily to the Lord for help. I do not mention the difficulty of your work to discourage you. It is fit you should know it, that you may know how to combat it; and that there is no hope of surmounting it with any degree of success, but by continual dependance upon God. You know your worldly business will not prosper without the divine blessing, and yet you do not think this a reason for neglecting it; but sow in hope, and reap the fruit of

of your labours. Think and act thus for your souls. Look up to God in your spiritual concerns, and let the sense of your weakness keep you close to him in prayer. There is your remedy. All difficulties will fall down before it, and without it, you can do nothing. Nature will maintain it's ground, the world will be your portion, sin will reign in you, and the strong man armed keep possession, in spite of all your endeavours.

3. But now, lest we should be hindered by any vain reasonings in this matter, as if the exercise of prayer was a questioning of the omniscience, infinite goodness, and unchangeableness of God, who knows without our information what is best for us, will be moved by his own gracious will to bestow it without our asking, and cannot be wrought upon by any importunity of ours, to change his purposes; or lest we should be discouraged by the sense of our unworthiness from approaching so great a Majesty, and notwithstanding the *importance* of the blessings we want, and our *utter inability* to receive them in any other way than as a gift from God, fear to ask them; let me desire you to consider once more, that he has removed all such

apprehensions, and answered all objections to the duty of prayer by an express *command* to us, to lay our wants before him, and by making our asking the condition of obtaining. He has in mercy made it our duty to importune him with our earnest petitions, for what he knows to be necessary for us; and by not asking, we add to all our other transgressions the breach of a plain command. For such the text is. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." This does not mean, that we may chuse whether we will ask or not; but lays us under a necessity of doing it. And we wrong our souls every way by not complying with the injunction. We famish them by not seeking for those supplies of grace which must keep them alive; and plunge them deeper into guilt by a continued act of wilful disobedience. This, like every other command, obliges strictly to performance, as such; and we cannot neglect it, without throwing up our duty, and rebelling against the authority of God. But then, like every other command, it points to a blessing. For God commands nothing for his own sake, or because of any advantage it brings to him; but solely for

the use and benefit of man ; either to prevent our misery, or procure some great good to us. And what good does prayer, true prayer, not procure to us ? It is the key to the heart of God, the bond of our friendship with him, brings heaven into the soul, and fills it with the riches of eternity.

For these reasons,—because we *must* have spiritual blessings from God—because we are in a state of great *weakness* and disorder, and cannot give them to ourselves—and because of the *command*—every man whose eyes are opened, *does* pray. It is the bent of his renewed nature, his will is to it, and his heart is in it. He presents himself continually before God, with some such words as these ; “ O cast not out my prayer, nor turn thy mercy from me.” His work is before him, he knows what he has to pray for, and cannot but pray. He loves his soul, values the peace of God, aims at heaven, and would not neglect his title to it for the world. And he knows that prayer is the great means of attaining and securing it ; of excellent and most necessary use to keep the sense of God fresh and lively in our minds ; to fix us in a state of dependence on him, and communion with him ;

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to remind us continually of our duties, sins, wants, and weakness, and engage the attention of the soul to it's great everlasting interest.

I now come to draw this matter to a point; and thereby to fasten conviction upon you, and give you a sight of your condition. Help, O God! for without thee, the words of man are vain, and I shall only speak into the air.

There is not so much as one in this whole assembly, who does not call and think himself a Christian, let his outward appearance and conversation be what it will. The drunkard, the profane swearer, the stealer, the liar, the Sabbath-breaker, the notorious open sinner, seen and known of all men, pretends to have hope towards God, and trusts in mercy; and when his title to it is called in question, *the fool rageth, and is confident*. They are Solomon's words, and I must make no apology for them. Others do not sin so grossly. Others again are still more smooth and civil in their behaviour, and in the main can justify themselves before men. And these last especially, have no doubt of the goodness of their state, and stand amazed when they are called upon to examine it, and consider what

what ground they are upon for life. But now, the point I would keep you to, one and all, and the question I would ask, is this—Is Christ precious to you, and salvation by him the great desire of your hearts, so that you cannot but wish to have that work prosper with you, whatever becomes of you in other respects, and accordingly pray for a blessing upon it, truly, earnestly, daily? This is a great deal more, than any kind of outward behaviour, any form or appearance of religion. You may be tolerably exact in your outward walk, from natural prudence, or worldly interest. You may join in the public worship of God, for decency's sake, or partly to quiet conscience, which will not let you be easy in the total neglect of it. But still this is no proof of conversion. It may be, and often is great self-deceit, seal you up in blindness, and keep you from Christ. Ask yourselves therefore, does the sense of your wants, and the experience of your weakness, drive you to God? Are you in a state of prayer for the blessings of the new covenant, redemption by Christ, and renewal to the image of God in holiness? If you are not, the case is plain with you. You can only be self-righteous at the best. You have received
nothing

nothing from God, because you will not ask. Your hearts are not moved within you as they should be. You are cold and unconcerned where all is at stake. You should tremble to think of the condition you are in. Is it far more than a matter of life and death; is it grace or no grace; Christ or no Christ with you; is the point whether you shall be redeemed men and women, restored to the favour of God, and made fit for heaven, or die in your sins; are you not only allowed, but commanded to ask for remission of sins, faith, and a new heart; does the Scripture say, pray, pray, pray; ask, it shall be given you—and have you no will to it? Consider, I say, what you are, and whether here is not full proof of your being in a dead state. A Christian, and not pray?—Why it is his nature, the proper working of the new life he has received, the breath by which he lives; and if a child can live without air, when it is born into the world, so may you be alive to God's kingdom of grace, without prayer. Do not mistake, do not deceive yourselves. I do not mean only saying of prayers, whether at church or any where else; a man may do this without one spark of a true life in him, and be very exact
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in it all his days, without ever coming under a work of grace. No; the HEART must pray; for the lips only cannot. The man must have one great desire to be delivered from the body of his death. He must be awakened to a sense of his corruption, and seek his remedy, as he would under the sharp pains of a bodily distemper. He must long to be a partaker of the grace of God in Christ, and set it up as the mark he is aiming at, and value nothing in comparison of it, and be continually calling out for spiritual strength. This is prayer, this is conversion and newness of life, this is worshipping in Spirit, and in truth. This every Christian does, and who ever does not, or cannot thus pray, is in darkness. He neither knows what he is, nor what he wants. Christian salvation is not the pearl of great price with him. Whatever he may think of himself, or whatever he is doing in the world, or in religion, he is alienated from the life of God, and a stranger to the new birth. For all the children of God, as certainly look up to him for his gifts, and have the same earnest will to obtain them, as the men of this world have for earthly things; and if prayer was not commanded, they would fly to it of themselves, and

and be carried to it by their own feeling. See a lively picture of this in all those sick and diseased who came to Christ for a cure. See it more especially in the woman of Canaan, who would not be beat off from him, with any denial. See it in blind Bartimeus, who cried out again, "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," would not have his mouth stopped, and when he was called, cast away his garment for haste, to come to Jesus.

Thus we should all be affected. What thou readest in scripture, must spring up in thy soul, and be thy own feeling. Know thy corruption and death, know thy wants and weakness, thy want of healing, thy want of Christ, thy want of grace to do the will of God, and then keep thyself from him and hold thy tongue, if thou canst. Here we fail wretchedly. We are not in a state of secret prayer from a sense of our condition, and this makes us backward to it, in other respects. We can come to church on Sundays, but nauseate the worship of God upon any other day, and have not so much as a Christian appearance, by setting it up in our families. We have a multitude of vain excuses to lay conscience asleep, and harden ourselves in an evil way.

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Let the farm be minded, and let Christ go. So you say in effect. Business must be pretended, though many a time and oft, you have none that need keep you from doing a charitable office to your starving souls. Oh! this could never be if faith was active and striving in us, if we sought the kingdom of God and his righteousness in the first place, if we were giving all diligence to make our calling and election sure. We should then ask, seek, and knock, like poor beggars, as we are, and resolve to take no denial. Our not doing it, I say it again, is full proof that we are in the deadness of a natural state. This is the point I have been aiming to bring you to, and I pray God strike it this hour with deep conviction into your hearts.—If you are not in a state of prayer, you are not in a state of salvation.—Christ is nothing to you; and you grossly deceive yourselves, if you think your interest in him is any part of your concern. I will bring the matter still more home to you, if I can.

If we knew certainly that we could better ourselves in our worldly estate, preserve the health of our bodies, and add to our heap by praying, we should not slight it, but find it an easy and delightful service. Now
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what is the reason of this? It is because we truly and sincerely wish for these things, they lie next our hearts, and we would be sure not to go without them for want of a daily prayer. And if we neglected this condition of obtaining them, it would be a certain sign that we set no value upon them. Ah! my brethren, the application is easy. You do not love your souls; God is not your portion; Christ is not your life; heaven is not your aim; salvation is not your great business in the world; you value none of these things. If you did, you would pray, as certainly as you desire to eat when you are hungry, and much more than you would for your bodies. You would know what St. Paul means, when he says, *pray without ceasing*. "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me," would almost always be uppermost in your thoughts. The spirit of grace, and of supplications would be poured upon you. You would abound in every kind, and instance of prayer. You would meet God in secret, and in the depth of your hearts. You who can, and many of you can, would meet me here on a week day; and all would take up the resolution of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Josh. xxiv. 15. And that
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more especially as we are confident from the text that all our petitions of this kind will be granted; "ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

There may be, and doubtless are, different degrees of this spirit of prayer in different persons, according to the different measures of their faith; neither is the disposition and will to pray, always at the same height in any. Alas! the best have occasion to complain of their being too often cold and unaffected in their addresses to God; and it is their trouble when they are so. But what they *do* ask in the first place, whenever they pray, and *would* always ask with the greatest earnestness of desire, is to be established in the faith, to love God, to know Christ, and improve in all manner of holiness according to his Gospel. And this is required of all, as a necessary proof of a work of grace in their hearts.

Let me now observe to you, what perhaps you may think strange, that so long as we live we cannot but pray, in some way or other, either for God, or our lusts, for good or evil. Every man prays according to his state. The wicked, or worldly man, prays, and prays continually too, though he does

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not directly intend it, nor put the wish of his heart into a form of words. What we most delight in, that is our prayer, and nothing else; and God sees it always to be so, and cannot be deceived by any words to a contrary meaning. Oh! what a sad state is that for a man to be in, to have his will and inward desire, so contrary to the will of God, that in reality he is always praying against himself!

But suppose a person, so far awakened, as to be convinced, that he neither does, nor knows how to pray according to the mind and will of God, that he has lived in utter neglect of the duty, is an utter stranger to a praying frame of mind, has wronged his soul, and lost his baptism, and therefore is in a most dangerous condition of unbelief, what must he do? Call out of the deep, as he would, if he was drowning. He is in a melancholy, woeful plight, but something must be done. Though he cannot pray as a saint, he may pray as a sinner, sensible of his misery, and danger. He must cry mightily to the Lord, for grace and mercy to help him in his time of need. And if he does, his prayer will not be rejected. The text has a blessing in it for *him*. “ Ask, and it shall be given thee; seek,

seek, and thou shalt find; knock, and it shall be opened unto thee." Pray for repentance; and when thy repentings are kindled within thee, they will lead thee on to pray for faith, and the prayer of faith will be the joy of thy life.

O! begin, begin to pray as you can, and as God shall enable you, that you may go on to receive the full benefit of the promise contained in these gracious words. For they are a box of very precious ointment, and I must not conclude without breaking it open. Think what you are, and what you may be, what you are by nature, and what you may be by grace; that you are children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins, want remission, and holiness to fit you for heaven; that death is your desert, and life is offered you; that you may be restored to the favour of God, his children by adoption, and joint heirs with Christ; that you may have his love shed abroad in your hearts, and abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost; that instead of the miserable comforts of this vain life, you may have joy in God, and a blessed foretaste of heaven in your souls; that instead of being under the dominion of sin, feeling it's curse in your natures, and dread-

ing the eternal punishment of it, you may have strength against it, and be delivered both from it's reigning and condemning power ; that all Christ did and suffered will be yours, and God himself your God for ever and ever :—Think, I say, when you hear these words, that all this and much more than I can mention is contained in them ; deliverance from all evil, possession, or hope of all good ; all the love of the Father, all the blessings of the Son, all the comforts of the Spirit. May God incline you to ask, and enlarge your hearts to receive them.

You who know what it is to ask, and how to ask aright, be sure not to ask for a little. The grant is without limitation, ask, and it shall be given you ; raise your desires to the heighth of it. Ask for the presence of God in your souls, ask for renewed wills, and pure hearts, ask for faith, hope and charity ; and know that when you have asked all you can think of, if your wishes reach at heaven, God is able to do, and will do, exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think.

No words can describe the blessedness of a soul which thus lives in communion with God ; asking and receiving, seeking and finding,

finding, knocking, and having the door opened. For what is happiness but this? Or how can we describe it better, than by saying, that a man wishes for the very thing he ought, and is sure to have it? And such is the man of prayer, the Christian. He chuses the fountain of all happiness for his portion, and cannot be disappointed of his desire. He is happy in the very act of prayer; knowing it to be the right frame of his mind; the proof of his renewed state, and his capacity for receiving blessing from God. And he is happy in the returns of it; increasing in knowledge, faith, and holiness, and passing through the world with a hope full of immortality. O blessed Jesus, teach us all to pray: for the desire is from thee, and thou givest thyself with it, and we cannot receive thee, till we do pray.

For on the other hand, the words have a curse wrapped up in them, as well as a blessing, that of leaving all prayerless men to themselves. They have not because they ask not. And what all nature would be without blessing from God, what the earth would be without rain and sunshine, what a prisoner would be in the deepest dungeon, such is the condition of every soul, however improved in other respects, which feels no

want, desires no relief, and therefore does not, cannot pray, but shuts itself up in it's own darkness, corruption and miserable weakness. May God make us sensible of it, and deliver us from it!

O Lord, thy heart is toward the children of men, and thine ears are always open to their prayers; thou hast sent thy Son into the world, to awaken us to a sense of our lost condition, and redeem us from it; thou sendest thy Spirit into our hearts, to raise in us strong cries after thee; so work in us by thy grace, that we may see the things which belong to our everlasting peace, and turn to thee in prayer for the blessings which thou hast promised, and prepared for us in Jesus Christ. To whom with thee, O Father, and thee, O Holy Ghost, be glory, now and for ever more. Amen.

S E R M O N X I.

EXODUS XX. 18.

Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy,

THE Sabbath is of divine appointment for the service and benefit of man; to keep the sense of God fresh and lively upon our minds, to unite our hearts to him, to turn our thoughts to the contemplation of that eternal rest for which we were made and sent into the world, and keep us in a state of continual preparation for it; that by spending that day more especially, under the obligation of a command from God, in sacred employments, in the care of our souls, and the more solemn performance of religious worship, and religious duties, we might be the better disposed to keep every other commandment, and spend every day of our lives in such a serious and Christian manner, as will yield us true comfort here, and qualify

us for the everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven.

I am this day to plead with you on God's behalf for the observation of a command, which is of unspeakable importance to your souls, the honour of God, and the interest of religion. And if I should speak in such a manner as, with the Spirit's help, to shew you your transgression, and convince you of sin, I hope it will have the effect I aim at in all my preaching; which is, to bring you in repentance to the Lord Jesus Christ for remission, and through him to a willing subjection and obedience to the God and Father of your spirits. Lord, have mercy on us, and help us, for we are bowed down to the earth; and thy Sabbaths, which should remind us of our great business in the world, are a burthen to us. We neglect and profane them; and instead of employing them in thy service, and a diligent preparation for eternity, they return only to increase our guilt, and expose us to a heavier sentence of condemnation.

Brethren, here is a positive, plain command of the most high God, *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*; with a particular mark of observation set upon it, *Remember*. For if thou dost not, it is at the

hazard of thy soul. So far as thou art disposed to keep it, thou art alive unto God; so far as thou dost keep it, thy soul will prosper. The command is *for* thy soul. Nothing else that thou dost, can prove thee to be in the way of godliness; nothing will be such a means to keep thee in it, and promote thy spiritual comfort and edification. Keep it as unto the Lord, to get above the world, to think of and fit thyself for heaven, and it will be blessed to thy eternal advantage. Neglect it, or loiter it away in idleness, or at best in the formality of a merely outward worship, and thy great work will be at a stand with thee all the days of thy life. It is in this view I would speak to you of the Sabbath. And when you see and consider the reason of it's appointment, it will shew you in a strong light the necessity of caring for your souls, enable you to judge of your religious state, and if the command is not weighty upon your minds, convince you of sin. For every one that hears me is either a religious observer of the Sabbath, or an unconverted worldling; and wherever it is slighted, or unimproved, there is neither grace in the heart, nor desire of it.

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In order to your understanding more clearly what I have to say to you upon this subject, and that you may go along with me in every part of my discourse ;

I. I shall consider the *time when* the law of the Sabbath was first given.

II. The *place where* it was given.

III. The time and manner of it's being renewed.

IV. I shall set before you the end and reason of the Sabbath's being appointed.

I. We may observe that the law of the Sabbath is the first mentioned in Scripture, and therefore probably God's first command, given to Adam as a standing memorial of his resting from the work of creation, to be conveyed through him to all his posterity, and as it begun with the creation of the world, to endure to the end of it. I say this command has a peculiar claim to our attention, as being the *first* which came from the mouth of God. We may be sure that for this very reason it contains matter of high regard, and is of the utmost consequence

sequence to the glory of God, and the well-being of man. Hear the solemn words of institution, as they stand recorded, Gen. ii. 2, 3. *And on the seventh day God (had) ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.* Vainly do some pretend that this was delivered only by way of anticipation, as a declaration of what God intended to do afterwards, and to give the greater weight and authority to the command of the Sabbath, when it should be published by his servant Moses in the decalogue, at the end of more than two thousand four hundred years. Here is nothing said or implied to countenance such a notion; and I could as soon believe that the world was not created, according to the relation which is given of it in the first chapter of the Bible, or that the sun did not shine from the beginning, as that the seventh day was not then immediately blessed and sanctified to the use of man. From the moment there was a man upon earth, and as soon as time was, it was the will of God that a seventh part of it should be more immediately consecrated to his service; that he might be solemnly owned as the Creator,

tor, Governor, and Preserver of the world, to fix us in subjection to him, and dependance on him, to keep his image alive in us, to remind us perpetually that our rest is not here, and increase our thirst after those eternal pleasures at his right hand, for which he gave us our beings. It is true, this original institution of the Sabbath is not delivered in the form of a command. But to what end can we suppose it was blessed and sanctified then, if it was not to take place immediately, given to the first man as a law, and bound upon him by an express injunction, as a perpetual, and most sacred ordinance to him, and all succeeding generations? And therefore when it is said that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, the words can have no other meaning than that it was intended for a general blessing to mankind at all times, and should be blessed to them in the sanctified use and observation of it. And accordingly the great design, sacredness, and necessity of it, is thus explained by the prophet Ezekiel, xx. 12. *I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.* When God separated the family of Abraham as a holy nation, to revive the knowledge

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ledge of himself, and to prepare them and all others for the last discovery he was to make of himself, and the full display of his mercy, truth, and purity, in the religion of Christ, what did he do to put them perpetually in mind of their duty and privilege, what was their badge of distinction, what were the chosen means for continuing, and preserving them a holy people? The prophet says, he gave them the Sabbath. Not that it was first given and appointed to the Jews at the delivery of the law on mount Sinai; for it appears from Scripture history that it was in use before, and no doubt in virtue of the primitive institution; but renewed and confirmed to them, with a particular charge for the strict observation of it; as if without it their sanctification, or fitness for heaven, was not to be hoped for, and they would have been in continual danger of relapsing into ignorance and forgetfulness of God. This means therefore of holy living, and spiritual improvement, was never withheld from mankind. It was given in aid of our weakness from the beginning. The importance of it appears more especially from the *Time* of its appointment; and the prophet, you see, declares the use of it in such a manner as to recom-

recommend it to our most serious regard. If it was a sign to the Jews that it was the Lord that sanctified them—that they *must* be sanctified, *could* be sanctified only by him, and certainly *would* be sanctified in this way of his appointing—let all, who are in pursuit of holiness, consider how this end can be attained without drawing nigh to God, and seeking for a blessing upon their souls, in the devout observation of his Sabbaths.

II. Let it be observed, that the Sabbath was given to Adam in paradise, when he stood before God in the glory of his new creation, and the full vigour and perfection of his nature. Nevertheless, as a creature, he was in a state of dependance, and trust in God for the continuance and increase of his graces; and could no more preserve his innocence, or secure his happiness, without the divine co-operation, than he could make himself at the first. To him therefore was this law given, before sin and death enter'd into the world; to prevent his fall, to keep him close to the Fountain of all good, to qualify him to live in communion with his Maker, to remind him of his impotence, and that he too, holy and happy as he was, *might know that it was the Lord that sanctified him.* The Rest he was
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made for, he was not to attain in this life, but to be trained up for it by a proper discipline. Of which the Sabbath was an excellent part, as being a type of that rest instituted on purpose to confirm his belief of it, to enflame his desires after it, and keep him in a state of preparation for it. The inspired penman says, *God rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.* Now observe; as the work of creation was no labour, so the ending of it, strictly speaking, could be no rest to *Him*. But having been represented as employing himself in the six days work of creation, his ceasing from it is likewise spoken of as a resting, or returning into himself, or into that rest which he is eternally to himself; and therefore the day on which he thus rested was blessed and sanctified. Certainly not for himself; but to convey life and blessing to man in the observation of it; to reveal, and, as it were, open heaven, and to be a perpetual lesson of instruction to him to turn the eye of his soul from all created objects to that rest into which God is said to have entered, as the end for which he was made, and the great blessing he was warranted to expect from him.

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Now if the divine wisdom saw it fit that the first man in his state of integrity should be bound to the law of the Sabbath, and have a considerable portion of his time set apart for sacred recollection, and the devout contemplation of his future rest; how much more expedient and necessary is such an ordinance for mankind in their present degenerate condition of weakness, sensuality, attachment to the world, and alienation from God? Whatever reasons may be assigned for the appointment of it at first, when *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good*, are surely of double force now, when *all flesh have corrupted their way before him*; and the more indisposed we are for our proper happiness, the more we are fallen from God, the more need we have of every help, and especially of this great one, to turn our affections to him, and put us in a way of recovery. And accordingly you will perceive, that as we now want the Sabbath for these ends more than ever, so we are still under the discipline of it, and indispensably obliged to keep it holy. For besides the original, universal establishment and enacting of it, as the first law to the first man in paradise, which would of course be conveyed down
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to his posterity, and as it appears both from sacred and profane history was always remembered, God has moreover solemnly confirmed and renewed it.

III. Let us therefore consider what account the Scripture gives of it's renewal and establishment. If nothing more had been said of it than what is told us in the second chapter of Genesis, and it had never been mentioned again throughout the whole Bible, yet we could not help observing that it must be a matter of the greatest moment to the sons of men, considering the time and place of it's delivery; and we should find ourselves very hard put to it to give a reason why it should not be always in force. But God remembers his Sabbath, though we are so apt to slight and forget it. He knows of what importance it is to our happiness, and how great a blessing there is in it; and that we might have the strongest assurance that it was never to be dispensed with, or grow into disuse, behold! he has set his seal to it a second time, and speaks yet once again in the thunder of mount Sinai—*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.* And it is as if he had said: “Thou knowest that the seventh day is mine, that I consecrated it to myself from the beginning, and

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that it is sacrilege to rob me of it: thou knowest it is mine for thy sake; that thy heart may not go astray from me, that thy thoughts may not be lost and swallowed up in the business of the world, that thou mayest consider above all things that thou art an heir of heaven, and employ this sacred portion of thy time in raising thy affections to it: thou knowest that if thou dost not, thou wilt be in danger of living only to thyself, an earthly sensual creature, like the beasts that perish; thou wilt forget me, forget the great end for which thou wast created, forget thy immortal state, and in neglecting the Sabbath, neglect and despise thy eternal interest in me, and preparation for me: and therefore—*Remember to keep it holy.*” I have already observed to you, that the Sabbath, at this second promulgation of it, was commanded to the Jews both as a sign and means of their sanctification; and that they could neither be acknowledged as the servants and worshippers of God, nor answer the end of their being separated to him as a holy people, without seeking holiness from him in a faithful, conscientious observation of it. Obedience to it would be putting themselves in the way of a blessing, and God,

no doubt, would bless his own institution to them. And further it was a warning to them, that in the neglect of it nothing would prosper with them. He who knows best why he appointed it, and what an excellent means it is to preserve men at all times from the evil that is in the world and their own hearts, to keep their minds in a right, spiritual frame of love and adherence to him, and make them fit for himself, would work with them in the way of his own appointment, and they must not expect it in any other. It was therefore a gracious provision for their happiness, and a signal act of mercy to them, and in them to all others, thus to renew, and bind upon them the ordinance of the Sabbath ; with a repetition of the same reason which was given for it at the beginning, *viz.* because in it God rested from his work ; and with a particular strict charge to them to *remember, and keep it holy*, because their sanctification here, and rest with him hereafter, so very much depended upon it. And in order to beget in them a greater reverence and esteem for the Sabbath, now so solemnly renewed, and convince them more fully of their obligation to sanctify it to the Lord, in a holy use of it, they were directed

to consider the miracle of sending Manna as wrought in part for that end. *See*, said God to them, *for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.* Ex. xvi. 29. When some of them perversely made the experiment whether it would keep two days, *it bred worms, and stank.* v. 20. When they were ordered to gather a double quantity of it the sixth day, that they might have no pretence for not resting on the seventh, *it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.* v. 24. The matter was evident to their senses, and the will of God being thus confirmed, well might he expostulate with them, *how long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?* v. 28. From whence we may gather that the Sabbath was not unknown to them before, and that they were sensible of their obligation to observe it, though either they had not done it, or not as they ought, or else it would not have been said to them, *how long refuse ye to keep my commandments.* And I cannot help observing farther upon this passage, with respect to those who think every Sabbath so much time lost,
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and wish with all their hearts that they were at liberty to follow their callings then, nay and do so more or less, that possibly they may miscount their gains, and had better trust God to make them amends for resting upon that day, by blessing all the other six to them. We read of some who *sowed much, and brought in little, had not meat and drink to fill them, nor clothes to keep them warm, and put the wages they earned into a bag with holes.* Haggai i. 6. All went wrong with them for their disobedience to God; and Sabbath-breakers have as much reason to fear this curse as any. But whatever becomes of their worldly affairs, I am sure they wrong and famish their souls, and will find without repentance, that they have been doing worse than labouring for the wind. Sirs, you must act as you please; for you *will*; against law and commandment, in spite of God and man. The Sabbath-breaker is not now stoned, as he was under Moses, and that for gathering a few sticks; the matter is left to your own feeling and conscience. But methinks your Christian name might shame you into some regard to a command, which you cannot but observe God lays a very great stress upon, and that

because it is of such moment to your own spiritual, eternal welfare. And if you will still go on in your rebellion against God, know that he will not be mocked; and that you must one day feel the weight of those words, which at present are nothing but an empty sound to you—*fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* Matt. x. 28. It is, my brethren, it is a matter of great concern to your souls. The Sabbath is not to be thus trifled with, nor lightly regarded. As you love your souls you must not follow your worldly business on that day. And I wish you would also take notice, in the fear of God, that the buyer is no more clear of guilt than the seller, and by parity of reason whoever uses his neighbour's service in any kind on that day; and that if one sins, the other tempts to it. Hear what is said in Nehemiah, and be instructed by that zealous servant of God, whose praise it is to all generations that he laboured so faithfully and earnestly in restoring his worship. When *the people every one having knowledge, and having understanding, entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law*, this is mentioned amongst other things, which they had solemnly bound themselves unto, that
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if the people of the land bring ware, or any victuals on the Sabbath-day, to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath, or on the holy day. x. 28, 29, 31. And when they transgressed this covenant afterwards, and bought what was brought to be sold on the Sabbath; then, says he, I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, what evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day? 13, 17.

If you should ask now, what regard Christ paid to the Sabbath? you will perceive that he left it as he found it, without diminishing one jot from it's authority. And though he had frequent occasion to correct some mistakes of the Jews about it, who supposed that the sacredness of it was violated by works of mercy and necessity, yet he never gave the least hint that it was going to be abolished. And if we may judge from the succeeding practice of the Apostles, and first Christians, we shall have cause to believe that he was not wanting to them in his instructions concerning it. For it appears from Scripture, and we are assured by universal tradition, that they held it in the same veneration they had done before their conversion. Only with this remarkable difference; that whereas the Sabbath

was ordained from the beginning as a memorial of God's resting from the work of Creation, and dedicated to his honour and service as the maker of heaven and earth; and afterwards (probably) fixed to the day on which the Jews were delivered out of Egypt; so it was again changed to the day of Christ's resurrection; from thence ever since called the LORD's DAY; and also, as we are told, for this farther reason, because it was generally believed by the primitive Christians, that our Lord would come again on that day to judge the world. I say this is very remarkable; in as much as this change of the day by the Apostles not only confirms, but in effect new enacts the Sabbath. For it is not to be supposed that they would have ventured to make this innovation without a divine direction, either from Christ himself, or express revelation of the Spirit. And accordingly it has always been observed in the church, to the honour of God, and of Christ, and as an effectual means in the Spirit's hands to raise us to newness of life, to confirm and quicken us in our Christian progress.

P A R T I I.

IV. Having thus taken a view of the Scripture grounds of the Sabbath, we may now proceed with advantage to speak of the great end and reason of it's being appointed. I have already touched upon this under each head of discourse, but it may be worth our while to consider it apart; especially as we are so apt to lose sight of it, and content ourselves at best with a partial, outward observation of the Lord's day, instead of converting it wholly to our spiritual benefit and improvement. And what can this end be but the very same which God had in the creation of man, to dispose the way of all flesh toward the attainment of everlasting salvation, to turn our hearts to him, as their centre of rest, and the sole fountain of our happiness, to secure heaven to us, and bring us to himself. When God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, we are told it was because *in it he had rested from all his work*. Understand this right, and you will perceive that the chief design of it's being consecrated to a religious use, was that we might give all diligence to enter with him into his rest, embrace it as a promise, think of it
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and seek it from him as our portion, and have it continually brought to our remembrance that *there remaineth a rest to the people of God.* Heb. iv. 9. When the Sabbath was renewed to the Jews, it was with an express command that every soul among them should cease from all manner of labour, because God rested on it from his work of creation. And therefore they were to rest upon it too; that being at leisure from all other cares, they might attend strictly to the proper business of it, and keep it holy to the Lord, by devoting it to the care of their souls, and drawing nigh to him for their sanctification. When it was afterwards changed from the seventh day of the week to the first, in memory of Christ's resurrection, it still spoke the same language; but more clearly than ever, as Christ has now taken possession of heaven for us, washed us from our sins in his blood, and laid us under new obligations to live unto God, that we might follow him thither. So that every thing that is said concerning the Sabbath, both the first appointment of it, and the alterations which were afterwards made in it, sufficiently direct us to the principal end and design of it, which is under God to make and keep us holy, and check the growth

growth of a worldly spirit in us, which is the dead sleep of the soul, and would be the death of all our hopes. For this reason, I say, God, who knows our frame, how prone we are to forget him, and what a snare the world is to us, has ordained that every six days labour should be succeeded by a day of rest from all the occupations and employments of life; that by spending it in devout exercises, improving ourselves in religious knowledge, confirming ourselves in holy resolutions, and continually reviewing the state of our souls, we might secure, and be fitted for a happy eternity. And if the need we have of it, it's useful tendency, and the good effect it would produce wherever it is duly observed, was well considered, I am persuaded it would put an end to all disputes concerning the morality of it; as that means obedience to a divine command, a fitness to beget and cherish in us good dispositions, and confirm us in the love of God, and the practice of all other morality. And if we have not this end in view, the great, sacred purpose of it will be lost upon us; and not keeping it holy as a working-time with God, for our souls, for heaven, we keep it in vain. It is well known to those who, in the spirit of regeneration, are
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endeavouring to get above the world, how hard it is not to be entangled in it. And if all would consider the necessity of chusing God for their portion, and setting their affections on things above, of preparing themselves for him, and for their eternal abode with him, and what danger they are in of neglecting this from the perpetually returning cares and business of life, they would soon see the necessity and great use of the Sabbath, the wisdom and love of God in giving it as an unalterable law to mankind, gladly receive it, and bless him for putting such an advantage into their hands. When you are called upon to mind ~~the one~~ thing needful, to give up your names ~~to the~~ Lord Jesus Christ, and receive him into your hearts, you are apt to complain of ignorance, worldly incumbrances, the care of a family, want of time, bad memories, and what not. But before you settle upon such excuses, see whether the fault is not wholly in yourselves, and whether you do not wilfully refuse your remedy. God knows all this; but cannot give up his right in you, nor leave you to perish, and therefore has provided beforehand for your case. You *have* time, you *have* means, you *HAVE* the help you want in the Lord's day; and if you let it pass from time to time unimproved, your blood will

will be upon your own heads. In a life of seventy years there are three thousand six hundred and forty Sabbaths. A few of these, and much more all of them, well employed, might give the right bent to your minds, and make you wise unto salvation. And on the other hand, how can you expect to have your spiritual work in any forwardness, so as either to know distinctly what it is, or keep it warm upon your hearts, if you mispend or neglect every one of them? You will deny the charge, and say, your appearance in this place bears witness for you that you are not regardless of the Sabbath. My brethren, attend diligently to what I say, and let the Lord sit in judgement upon you. The public worship of Almighty God, hearing the Scriptures read, and the word preached, is doubtless a most excellent and necessary part of every Sunday's duty; and I wish all thought so, and had this at least to plead for themselves, that they are regular in their attendance upon it. We bind this strictly upon you; we declare to you in God's name that without it there is no Sabbath keeping; and that a careless absenting from the service of the church, or such indifference about it as to be frequently hindered from coming to it
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by frivolous excuses, is a certain mark of a graceless spirit, and want of religion. It is a shame to mention how many in every parish who call themselves Christians spend the day in a mere sauntering idleness, how many make work for themselves by needlessly going abroad, or travelling, as if the day was almost set apart for that purpose, and how hard some are to be taken off from the ordinary business of their calling. But I have a word to speak to those who have a better appearance, and are more scrupulous in this matter, and I pray God you may be willing to hear it. Still this may be nothing but form; and certainly is nothing else, when there is no searching into the soul, no more religious employment, no more aiming at growth in grace and holiness, in other parts of the day, than at other times. Would it grieve you to think you are of the number of those hypocrites, who *honour God with their lips, when their hearts are far from him*? See whether it is the aim of all you are doing in religion, to have your hearts recovered to him; and especially, whether you carefully and conscientiously employ your Sabbaths to this great purpose of all religion. Does the holiness of the day, and your observation of it, begin and end with the
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public service? Have you nothing more to do with God? Is there nothing more that you can do for your souls, to settle them in a habit of delight in, and obedience to him, and enable you to serve him truly all the days of your lives? I do not mean that this is not every day's work; for it is your principal, great work in the world. If you were truly turned to the Lord, you would find time for it more or less every day; and if you are unconcerned about it, or leave it unfinished, better would it be for you that you had never been born. But because you are unavoidably engaged for the greatest part of your time in the duties of your station, or providing the necessaries of life; and (observe) because the great end of your living for ever with God in heaven must at all events be secured; he has therefore discharged you from all other cares one day in seven, that by the constant return of it you might be reminded of your eternal state, and moreover bound it upon you by an express command to keep it holy, in attending closely upon it to the sacred business of your salvation. This, I say again, and nothing but this is keeping it holy. Whatever other subordinate ends there may be of the Sabbath, such as it's being a necessary
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time of rest for man and beast, this is the great one. The care of the soul, in order to it's everlasting rest, is God's chief aim in it, and should be ours. And whatever else we do or forbear, though we are never so constant and regular in our attendance on public worship, yet if we neglect the private duty of communing with our hearts in the presence of God, and waiting on him in prayer, and holy meditation, for a supply of the Spirit of grace to bless his Sabbaths to us, we have neither liveliness in them, nor life from them. What we call the service of the day, if we think it the whole service, leaves us just as it finds us, as little turned to God, and as little prepared for the coming of our Lord, as ever; and will have this farther bad effect, to seal us up in blindness and self-deceit. We shall flatter ourselves that in the main our hearts are right with God, and that with respect to this command at least he has nothing to lay to our charge, when we present him only with the lame sacrifice of an outward worship, and do no more in reality to the true sanctification of the Lord's day, and of ourselves in it, than if we cut off a dog's neck. See Isaiah, lxvi. 1, 2, 3, 4.

I have now set before you the law of the Sabbath. And if either the early appointment of it, as the first law to the first man, and in him to all his posterity, or the confirmation and renewal of it in the law of the ten commandments, with a particular emphasis in the wording of it, or the continuing of it, and regard paid to it by the first Christians, can enforce it upon us; if it's being a part of every fresh revelation which God made of himself, or the apparent reason and usefulness of it can recommend it to our approbation and esteem, we must necessarily think it a matter of very high concernment to us, and the observation of it our bounden duty, and an essential point of all true religion.

What I have to do farther, is to add a brief exhortation—and if you should be found wanting in this case, as probably you will, then to endeavour, with the help of God, to shew you your sin, and what you must do in the peril of your souls.

I may now say to you in the name of God, *Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.* God commands it, and your wants require it, and the religious improvement of it is of unspeakable consequence to you. It is no less than a design for heaven, and

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immortal glory. Keep it then as a day devoted to God, and to your dearest interest. Away with the poor formality of a Sunday's dress, or a bodily rest, or a few hours outward worship only; for it is nothing else in those who do no more. Keep it holy, by putting yourselves in a posture of holiness, and study to advance in it. Turn from the world, and let all your thoughts run in another channel. Consider, as you do on other days, what work you have now before you, and how to finish it to the best advantage. For a work you have set out to your hands, and as you follow it, so will the whole state and form of your lives be; either forgetfulness of God, and neglect of your souls, or a continual regard to them in the settled frame and temper of your minds. This day, converted to its proper use, would set you in the way you should go; and if ever you should be so unhappy as to turn aside from it, the next Sabbath, when you thus know the end and design of every Sabbath, would call you into it again. See, my friends, how God has contrived in mercy to meet you as it were at every turn. Be you as ready to meet *Him*. Think of that time when you must meet him in judgment, either to enter with him into his rest,
or

or hear the sentence of eternal separation from him. Think what a blessed advantage you have in your Sabbaths to prepare yourselves for a place at his right hand, and with what joy you will look back upon them, if they have been spent in seeking after him, and brought you happily to your last eternal Sabbath. O! how happy would you be now, if your consciences could bear you witness that you keep this end of them steadily in view, and are ready to say to every one of them as it comes, "Welcome, blest day! Come, my soul, this is a day of important business betwixt thy God and thee. Lose it not, forget not the design and use of it, remember to keep it holy. Call in thy scattered thoughts, and fix them upon the single point of thy salvation. It is the appointment and will of God that thou shouldst now have nothing else to do. Thy worldly affairs are in his hands, and be sure he will take care of them, so as to make all things work together for thy good. *If thou shalt call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, but framing thy inward thoughts, and suiting thy whole behaviour to the sacredness*

of it, he has engaged himself by promise to remember, and reward thee for it. Ifaiah lviii. 13, 14. Arise and shake thyself from the dust. Lift up thyself to the glorious hope which is set before thee, and by the loving kindness of God so statedly brought to thy remembrance, and leave all meaner things. This day was blessed, and sanctified from the beginning, that thou mightest make it the greatest of all blessings to thyself, by acquainting thyself with God, increasing thy longings after him, and securing thy portion in him. On this day thy Lord rose from the dead. Think of thy interest in him, think how he died and rose again to purchase and ensure thy everlasting happiness, dwell with delight and gratitude on the contemplation of those joys he has prepared for thee, and remember that all depends on thy own rising with him to a new state of faith, love, and purity of heart."

But methinks I hear you saying, this is strict. You know you do not thus keep the Sabbath, as a sacred law, never to be violated, by devoting it to religious improvement, and the care of your souls, and therefore I fear you will be ready to say in your own defence, that you need not. If this is
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indeed the inward thought of your hearts, I pray God I may meet with it; and shall now observe to you from hence what your temper and disposition is with regard to your salvation in general, and obedience to the divine law in particular. This is the very point to which I would draw all I have said; as knowing it will be in vain, if it does not bring you to a deep consideration of your state, and by that to conviction of sin.

If you find in yourselves a secret unwillingness to close with God's design in a true Sabbath-keeping, and in the main attend no more to the great concern of your recovery to him in holiness than you do at other times; what can be a surer sign than this—that religion is at a low ebb in you, and that you do not *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, in the first place*? The poor soul within you wants it's relief; the necessity is urgent; the day is come for your thinking of it, and working for it, and yet is passed over with extreme negligence and unconcern. And can you persuade yourselves that you are in earnest about your salvation? Certainly, if it was a day of some great, extraordinary advantage for this life, and you had a reasonable expectation

pectation of a tenfold blessing on your worldly substance, you would not lose a minute of it. Apply this as you easily may. Turn your eyes inward. Deceive yourselves no longer. Eternity, eternity is overlooked, and the gain of it despised. It is plain you have other business in the world, and that your hearts are otherwise engaged.

Again, in the neglect of this command, where is your obedience, and how will you ever be able to stand in judgment before God? *The wages of sin is death*; Rom. vi. 23. and *sin is the transgression of the law*. 1 John iii. 4. It is the great design of all Scripture to bring us to the acknowledgement and belief of these truths. And yet you are fearless and unawakened, and think not of the danger you are in, by living in opposition to the will of God, or but lightly regarding it. Now therefore, my brethren, for the love of God, and in pity to your souls, see in this instance what the frame and temper of your minds is with regard to obedience in general. You must begin somewhere; the word and law of God must judge you; something must strike conviction into your hearts, and fill them with trembling and astonishment. And
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whether it is to be this day, or no, I am sure I have found out your sin for you. If you do not pay a conscientious regard to the great law of the Sabbath, you are guilty before God, sinners in the whole form of your lives, whatever else you do, and liable to that dreadful sentence, *curst is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Gal. iii. 10. And if to this we add, what was mentioned before, the general backwardness of mankind to employ the Sabbath in caring and working for the soul: if the Spirit of disobedience shews itself with regard to a command which is more especially intended for the soul, and of such eminent use and service to it, we stand condemned. Here is a most melancholy proof against all such, in both these respects, that they are not yet entered upon the way of salvation. They do not separate themselves to God now, as his people, by labouring to enter into his rest, in a sincere observation of the *fourth* commandment, and therefore miserably deceive themselves if they have hope towards him. If they live and die in this state, when the time comes for the final separation of the good from the bad, they must be given up to
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their own choice, and sentenced to depart from him for ever, *into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* Matt. xxv. 41. Give way to the thought, that possibly this may be your own condition now whilst I am speaking, that you are not careful to make a right use of your Sabbaths, take no delight in them as opportunities for your souls, live in the continual breach of a plain command, and have great cause to suspect the soundness and sincerity of your hearts with regard to other points of obedience. When you make the trial, and bring yourselves to the touchstone of God's law, in the right, spiritual understanding of it, you will find you have made short work with it; and that as to any true obedience to any one command, from a principle of subjection to God, and love of Christ, it is no more weighty upon your consciences in any other instances than it is in this. Begin the examination. As I said before, you must begin somewhere. *The law must be your school-master to bring you to Christ;* Gal. iii. 24. and without a knowledge of your state, and a hearty conviction of your danger in sin, you cannot take one step toward him. And where then will you fly in the peril of your souls? *For this man is*
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the peace ; Mic. v. 5. neither is there salvation in any other ; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts iv. 12. And I must now farther tell you, as the conclusion of the whole, that when you are grounded in a lively sense of God's mercy in him, and lay hold on him by faith, when you see your danger, and your deliverance, when you have found relief in him from the guilt of sin, and the accusations of conscience, the law of God will be precious in your eyes, and your hearts turned to him in obedience. Then it will be the great wish of your souls that the Redeemer may come to you in the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel, and in the power of his Spirit, as well as the grace of remission. Christ in us will teach us to say, as he did, lo, I come to do thy will, O God ; Heb. x. 9. and when once his love is warm upon our hearts, it will fill us with grief and concern to think we should ever pass that saying of his so lightly over as we have done, If ye love me, keep my commandments. John xiv. 15. And especially the law of the Sabbath will be very dear to us, as a most excellent means appointed of God to keep us close to him in the general bent of our minds, in the whole form

of our lives, in our daily addressees to him, and in every good work. We shall know of a truth that in the want of a disposition to keep the Sabbath-day holy, according to the will of God, we have neglected our interest in him, were evil affected to all religion, and had no concern for our souls at any other time. And we shall not then need to be told what is a true keeping of the Lord's day, or what a mispending, or profanation of it. Worldly thoughts will be dismissed, and worldly business entirely laid aside, with thankfulness to God for obliging us to it, and providing so much better employment for us. We shall think a penny gained on that day a pound lost; nay, a canker in our estates, and a curse upon our families. And as to sports and pastimes, if all the world should join to allow and countenance us in it, our own hearts will tell us that every thing of that kind is contrary to the design, and inconsistent with the seriousness of the Sabbath, and a sad abuse of it. In a word, we shall think and judge, as all do who have their eyes opened, that God's work is the business of God's day, be diligent in it for the command's sake, and for the sake of our souls, and pray devoutly—*Lord, have mercy upon*
6 *us,*

us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.
Bring us in repentance to Christ for mercy;
turn our hearts to that rest which thou hast
prepared for us in him; and fix us in love
and dutiful subjection to thee through Him,
our only Saviour and Redeemer.

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our only reason and reason.

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